

Class

BS571

Book

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1818

3
S A C R E D
B I O G R A P H Y :

OR THE

HISTORY OF THE
P A T R I A R C H S.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

THE HISTORY OF
DEBORAH, RUTH, AND HANNAH.

BEING

A C O U R S E O F L E C T U R E S

DELIVERED AT THE SCOTTS CHURCH, LONDON WALL.

BY HENRY HUNTER, D. D.

THE THIRD AMERICAN EDITION.

COMPLETE IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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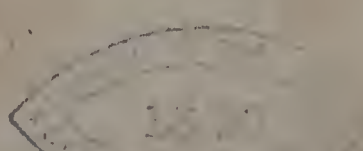
Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.—*John* viii. 58.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.—*Revelation* i. 8.

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Ruth ii. 19, 23, and iii. 1.—And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to-day is Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen. And Ruth, the Moabitess, said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest. And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field. So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest, and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother-in-law. Then Naomi, her mother-in-law, said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

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- 1 Sam. 9, 18.—So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drank. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord. And she was in bitterness of soul,⁹ and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of Hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a manchild, then I will give unto him the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, No, my Lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drank neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace

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- 1 Sam. i. 19, 23.—And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her. Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about, after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord. And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the Lord the yearly sacrifice, and his vow. But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever. And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the Lord establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.

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of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

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- 1 Sam. ii. 18, 21.—But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband, to offer the yearly sacrifice. And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The Lord give thee seed of this woman, for the loan which is lent to the Lord. And they went unto their own home. And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the Lord.

LECTURE XXI.

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- 1 Sam. ii. 12, 17, 23, 24.—Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord. And the priest's custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand; and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or chaldron, or pot; all that the flesh-hook brought up, the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither. Also before they burned the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the

priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force. Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord: for men abhorred the offering of the Lord. Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel. And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress.

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- 1 Sam. ii. 26.—And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men.

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LECTURE I.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.—REV. XX. 11, 12, 13.

IT is a solemn thing for a man to be judged of his own conscience. How sweet is the approving testimony of that bosom monitor and witness! but more bitter than death its upbraiding and reproaches. To stand at a human tribunal, with life or reputation, death or infamy depending on the issue, can never appear a light matter to one who understands and feels the value of either. Even conscious innocence and integrity, accompanied with good hope toward God, court not the eye of public inquiry; but prefer the secret, silent feast of inward peace, and of divine applause, to the public banquet of innocence proved and proclaimed by sound of trumpet. Serious it is to reflect that your name, your words, your conduct may become matter of record, and ages to come

mention them with approbation and esteem, or with indignation and contempt. But every feeling of this sort is lost in the certain and more awful prospect of judgment to come. It is a light thing to be judged of man, who can only kill the body, and blight the reputation, and beyond that hath nothing more that he can do; but how formidable is the judgment of him, who knows the heart, who records in "the book of his remembrance" the actions of the life, the words that fall from the tongue, the thoughts which arise in the heart; who will bring every secret thing to light, and "render to every man according to his works;" and who, "after he has killed, has power to bestroy body and soul in hell."

Aided by the light which sacred history sheds on ages and generations past, we have ventured into the solemn mansions of the dead, and conversed with those silent instructors who know not either to flatter or to fear; and whom the Spirit of God has condescended to delineate in their true colours and just proportions, that they may serve to us "for doctrine, and for reproof, and for correction, and for instruction in righteousness." We have plunged into ages beyond the flood, and contemplated human nature in its original glory; "man," as God made him, "perfect;" and man, as he made himself, lost in the multitude of his own inventions.

The "first man, by whom came death—the figure of Him who should come, by whom is the resurrection of the dead; Adam, in whom all die: Christ, in whom all shall be made alive."

We have attended "righteous Abel" to the altar of God, and beheld the smoke of his "more excellent sacrifice" ascending with acceptance to heaven: and "by which he, being dead, yet speaketh."

We have seen the hands of "wicked Cain" besmeared with a brother's blood; and the earth refusing to cover that blood, but calling to Heaven for ven-

geance on the murderer; and the guilty wretch rendered a terror to himself.

We have seen these, one after another, dropping into the grave; and in that, the triumph of sin and death. But in Enoch we behold the triumph of faith and holiness, the triumph of almighty grace over sin and death, and over him who has the power of death. Our eyes follow "the holy man who walked with God," not to the "dreary house appointed for all living," but, through the higher regions of the air, toward the blessed abodes of immortality, till a cloud receives him out of our sight.

We sought shelter with Noah, and his little saved remnant, from that deluge which destroyed a world of ungodly men, in the ark which God commanded; which that "preacher of righteousness prepared for the saving of his house:" and which Providence conducted and preserved amidst the wild uproar of contending elements—and with him perceived the wrathful storm spending its fury, and the dawning light of a day of mercy returning.

We have seen the renewed, restored world, again overspread with violence, ignorance, impiety and idolatry; and the hope of the human race ready to be extinguished in the person of a wandering, aged, childless man; that in the decay of exhausted, expiring nature, the world might be made to see, and to acknowledge the vigour, the infallibility, the unchangeableness of God's covenant of promise. We removed with that illustrious exile from place to place, and with joy beheld his faith crowned at length with the promised seed, "in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed."

From that "tender plant," that "root out of a dry ground," we saw a succession of fair and fruitful branches arise, while we studied the noiseless, sequestered, contemplative life of Isaac, and the active, variegated, chequered life of Jacob, his younger son.

In the affliction of Joseph we felt ourselves afflicted, in his exaltation we rejoiced, and by his virtues and piety, in every variety of human condition, we received at once instruction and reproof.

The sweet historian, who had disclosed all these wonders of antiquity to our view, opened to us all these stores of knowledge, all these sources of delight, comes forward himself at last upon the scene, and continues to minister to our pleasure and improvement, by a faithful and affecting detail of his own eventful story, and a candid display of his own sentiments, character and conduct. What heart so hard as not to melt at sight of yonder weeping babe, a deserted, exposed, perishing Hebrew child, floating down the stream! What heart does not glow to see him the pride and ornament of Pharaoh's imperial court, instructed in all the learning of the Egyptians! What bosom catches not the hallowed ardour of patriotic fire from the intrepid avenger of his country's wrongs! In whatever situation or character we view him, whithersoever we follow his steps, we feel ourselves attracted, delighted, instructed.

He furnishes us with the history of his brother Aaron and his family, and of the establishment of the Levitical priesthood, a type of the everlasting and unchangeable priesthood of the Redeemer. We attended the venerable pair of brothers to the top of the mountain, and beheld Aaron stript of his pontifical robes, resigning his charge, closing his eyes in death; and heard Moses himself warned to prepare for his departure.

Not only by a display of worth and excellence, but by a delineation of vice, by the exhibition of a "heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," has he conveyed to us the means of instruction and improvement; in presenting us with the portrait of Balaam, who "loved the wages of unrighteousness." In the character of that bad man, we behold the humiliating union of great talents and a corrupted heart;

prophetic gifts and moral depravity; knowledge of the truth, and wilful adherence to error; admiration of virtue, and fixed habits of vice; an earnest wish to “die the death of the righteous,” with the deliberate determination to live the life of the wicked; and all this mystery of iniquity explained in one short sentence; his heart went out after its covetousness.

All these have passed in review before us; and their existence, in succession to one another, occupies a space of two thousand five hundred years. But the text collects them, and us, and all succeeding generations of men, into one great co-existent assembly, to undergo a judgment infinitely more solemn than ever was pronounced from human tribunal; a judgment infallible, final, irreversible; which shall bring to trial, and condemn all hasty, rash, erroneous judgments of men, clear injured innocence, bring to light and reward hidden worth, abase insolence and pride, detect and expose hypocrisy. Let the prospect of it direct all our inquiries, animate all our exertions, dictate all our decisions on the character and conduct of other men, and influence, form and govern our own. Thus the review of preceding personages and events, and the prospect of those to come shall be animated, improved, sanctified; thus shall we feel our interest in, and connexion with the church of God universal, of every age, and converse with Moses and the prophets as our contemporaries, countrymen and friends, whom we shall shortly join, and be united to them in bonds of pure and everlasting love. Recollecting times past, anticipating ages to come, let us draw near and consider this great sight, and may God grant us to feel and improve its influence.

The imagery of the scene is sublime and striking. “I saw a great white throne.” “A throne,” royal state, established empire, acknowledged sway, the right and power of judgment united, universal, everlasting, uncontrollable dominion. A “great” throne.

The seat of kings is raised a little above the people; that of Solomon had six steps; ivory and gold lent their combined aid to enrich and adorn it. But what is the glory of Solomon? His throne once the seat of wisdom, to whose oracular voice foreign potentates and their nations listened with admiration and respect, was at length dishonoured, degraded, defiled by the impurities of idolatry, and by the imprudence and apostacy of him who sat upon it, and thus deprived of one of its firmest supporters, it shook under him, and he at length dropped from it, a monument of the nothingness and vanity of human grandeur, wealth and wisdom. Ten of its twelve props slipt from beneath it, through the imprudence of his son; and, after a few convulsive struggles, it sunk at length into the dust, a poor, precarious, subordinate throne, subject to the lordly state of an Assyrian prince. What is the glory of angels that excel in strength? Delegated power, derived splendour, imparted wisdom, dignity under authority. But, behold on yonder radiant throne, one “made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” “He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.” “Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Behold “the Lord sitting upon the throne, high and lifted up,” surrounded with the seraphim, crying continually unto one another, and saying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his goodness.”

“—A great *white* throne,” the emblem of purity, truth and righteousness; itself unsullied, and purifying all that approach it. “Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne; mercy and truth go before his face.” “Shall not the Judge of the whole earth do right?” With the purest inten-

tion, with the highest degree of human sagacity, with the most extensive knowledge of the law, and the most determined resolution faithfully to apply it, earthly tribunals are not secure from error: craft may overreach wisdom; hypocrisy may disguise the truth, or cover falsehood; the stream of justice may be diverted or forced out of its channel, and the pellucid tide undergo a temporary pollution. The princes of this world must see with the eyes and hear with the ears of other men; the worthy and the wise may, of course, be kept at a distance, while demerit, wickedness and folly bask in the sunshine of royal favour. But yonder radiant throne applies an infallible test to all that approach it: hypocrisy drops the mask, the windings of deceit and cunning stand exposed, the brazen, imposing forehead of impudence is covered with a blush, and the stony, unfeeling, unrelenting heart is dissolved into water—modest worth rears its drooping head, conscious integrity expands its glowing bosom, and purity seeks the source from which it sprung.

Observe the difference; mark the changes which these undergo, as they draw nigh; see the hardened sinner, cased in sevenfold adamant, advancing with intrepid step, striving to make assurance pass for innocence. But, lo, the rays of that white throne have fallen upon him; the spots begin to appear, they grow blacker and blacker, he gradually becomes abominable and more abominable; odious to the beholder, a terror to himself, he shrinks from inquiry, darkness is diffused around from the brightness of that light; he calls upon the mountains to fall upon him, and upon the hills to cover him.

Not so the humble follower of the Lamb. His countenance becomes more and more serene, his confidence increases, every blemish disappears, “the glory of the Lord is risen upon him,” his lustre brightens as he proceeds, at length he is united to, he is lost in the fountain of joy.

“I *saw* him that sat on it.” “No man hath seen God at any time.” Remove that cloud, that vapor, and I am unable steadfastly to behold the face of the sun: how much more, the face of him who arrays the sun in all his effulgence! If he raise his voice a little louder in the whirlwind, or in the thunder, I am overwhelmed and lost.

Ah! it is conscious guilt that appals me, that clothes the face of God with terror, that roars in the tempest, that raises the voice of the mighty thunder; but, “reconciled unto God,” “justified by faith,” I “have peace with God,” I see as I am seen, I know as I am known: “beholding with open face as in a glass the glory of the Lord,” lo, the believer is gradually “changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.” “The only begotten who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

Did the pomp and wisdom of an earthly potentate dazzle and delight the eyes of a sovereign like himself, and constrain one inured to scenes of magnificence, to cry out, “It was a true report that I heard in mine own land—howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and behold the half was not told me?” What then will it be to see, with the beloved disciple, “a great white throne, and him who sits upon it,” with the myriads of the heavenly host bending before it, rejoicing without trembling.

Grant me, gracious God, now to see thee in these thy lower works, in the wonders of thy providence, in the exceeding riches of thy grace, in the face of thy Son Christ Jesus, and thereby prepare me for seeing thee as thou art, and for being made like unto thee! Place me with thy servant Moses upon a rock, put me in a cleft of the rock, cover me with thy hand while thou passest by, remove thy hand, that I may trace thy presence in the blessings thou hast left behind thee, that I may be strengthened to meet the direct rays of thy countenance, when thou comest to “be glorified

in thy saints, and admired in all them that believe.” “From whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them.”

“All these things shall be dissolved. The heavens shall pass away with great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.” “They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same.” God “*spake*, and it was done; he gave commandment, and it stood fast.” “At his word earth and heaven rose out of chaos,” and lo, he *looks* them into nothing again; they shrink from his presence, they vanish at his nod, they cannot abide the brightness of his coming. They have fulfilled their day, they have accomplished the purpose of him who made them, they have contributed their aid toward the rearing of a more glorious fabric, and having become unnecessary, that moment disappear.

The local and transient effects of an earthquake, a hurricane, an inundation, are striking, impressive and permanent: proud cities levelled to the earth, or swallowed up of it; fertile plains overwhelmed with a briny or a fiery tide; the glory of man sought but not to be found. But what is this to the dissolution of a globe? Surely the balance must be destroyed, a blank in nature take place, and wild uproar ensue. No, the vision represents a whole system passing away: that sun and all the surrounding planets, and innumerable other “planets circling other suns,” lost, yet not missed; fled “as the baseless fabric of a vision,” and not a wreck left behind: and yet no schism, no deficiency in the body; for the promise of the Eternal immediately repairs the loss; he makes “all things new;” “new heavens and a new earth, therein dwelleth righteousness.”

With the heavens and the earth, the little, fading

interests and distinctions of the world vanish also. Before his face all is reduced to one level, all is composed and tranquillized; every one reads his doom in the face of the sovereign Judge. The heavens and earth have fled away, but the rational beings which peopled them remain; they are of a more enduring substance, they partake of the nature of God himself, they are immortal, eternal like him. “I saw,” says John, “the dead *small* and *great* stand before God.”

When time was, these were distinctive characters. There was the infant of days, and the hoary head, the inhabitant of the palace, and of the cottage, the learned and the illiterate, the slave and his master. But these marks of difference are for ever abolished. Indeed they were long before abolished. Before that great and notable day of the Lord came, before the judgment was set, or the books were opened, disease and death and the grave had levelled all the distinctions of this world; had reduced the sceptred monarch to the condition of the peasant, annulled the difference between the slave and his master. The decisive hour is now come which is for ever to determine who is henceforth to be accounted small, and who great; the hour that shall bring to light hidden worth, and thrust presumptuous pride into outer darkness; that shall exalt the good to the throne of God, and plunge the wicked into the depths of hell.

The *dead* small and great. Even the awful distinction between the dead and the living shall then be done away. They were dead, but are alive again; “for all live to him.” Behold the mouldering earth, before it be for ever dissolved, restoring to existence every particle of itself which once entered into the composition of a human being, which was once animated with the breath of life. Behold the spacious sea, before it be for ever dried up, surrendering its hidden treasure, not the silver and gold, and jewels which its vast womb contains, but the innumerable myriads of

men and women it had been insatiately devouring during so many ages, and whom it can no longer cover or conceal. The sound of the last trumpet has dispelled their long slumber. See, they emerge from their watery bed, they spring up into newness of life, their eyes again behold the light, the light of an eternal day, they swim through regions of transparent air, they can die no more, they hasten to appear before their Judge. Behold the grim king of terrors, faithful to his trust, giving in the exact register of his wide domain, resigning his awful empire, restoring his captives to life and liberty, and their rightful Lord; not one lost, not one detained: and the great destroyer is at length himself destroyed.

And for what purpose this mighty preparation, this second birth of nature, this new creation of God? Behold an assembled world from the father of the human race down to the youngest of his sons, *stand* before God. They stand as subjects in the presence of their Sovereign, as expectants before the eternal Arbiter of their destiny. In his eyes, in their own consciences they read their doom; they stand to hear their irreversible decree; their posture speaks acknowledgment of the right of judging, submission to authority, acquiescence in the wisdom and justice of the Judge. But that erect attitude must quickly change into the prostration of dutiful and grateful children, or of foes subdued, of wretches condemned; for lo,

The books are opened, judgment begins: It is spoken after the manner of men. Earthly judges refer to statutes as the rule of their decisions; men are tried by the laws of their country, and because human faculties are limited and imperfect, the memory unretentive, the understanding liable to error, the heart warped by partial affections, facts must be preserved in written documents, to prevent alteration or mistake, the law expressed in clear and distinct terms, and the cause, not the person of the party, held up as the ob-

ject of judgment. But what need of books or of records to assist the memory of Him who is omniscient, to whom are known all his own works, and all the ways of men from the foundation of the world; whose will is the law; and who knows no distinction but that between truth and falsehood, right and wrong? What need of external evidence, of the testimony of others, when every man carries the evidence in his own bosom, and is acquitted or condemned of his own conscience? What, O man, are the contents of these awful books? The words thou art now speaking, the pursuits in which thou art now engaged, the spirit by which thou art now actuated. Thou art every day filling up the record, with thy hand enrolling thine own honour or shame; and the unfolding of that day shall reveal that only which thou thyself hast written. On thyself it rests whether the last solemn discovery is to cover thee with everlasting contempt, or to crown thee with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; whether the opening of the book of life is to display thy name in golden characters to angels and men, or the register of condemnation consign thee to everlasting punishment. The book that shall be opened is none other than the book of scripture, the infallible rule of faith and manners, and according as thou art conformed unto, fallest short of, or exceedest that standard, so shall thy doom be.

They were judged every one according to his works. In this mixed and imperfect state, it frequently happens that the guilty escape, and the innocent suffer. “The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” Princes play the madman, and quarrel, and fight, and myriads of unoffending wretches pay the forfeit of that folly. But before yonder tribunal every one appears to answer for himself; every one comes to reap the fruit of his own doings. “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O God, for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified.” “If thou,

Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgression." "Behold, O God, our Shield, and look upon the face of thine Anointed."

In meditating on this subject, let us learn to forbear from exercising this dread prerogative of the Eternal, let us refrain from judging. God has challenged this right with emphatic solemnity as his own: "*Judgment is mine*, I will repay, saith the Lord." "All judgment is committed unto the Son." "Therefore thou art inexcuseable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemneth thyself; for thou that judgest, doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality; eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath: tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile; for there is no respect of persons with God," Rom. ii. 1—11.

But while by every serious consideration thou art restrained, ignorant fallible creature, from judging ano-

ther—by every serious consideration thou art encouraged, constrained to examine and to judge thyself. It may be the means of preventing, of averting the righteous judgment of God. It will lead thee to the discovery of thy own weakness, and thereby become a source of wisdom and strength. It will unfold the deceitfulness of sin, and the treachery of thine own heart, and lead thee in trembling hope to the blood of sprinkling, which taketh away the sin of the world. It will render thee compassionate and gentle to the infirmities of others, because that thou also hast sinned. It will produce “godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of.” It will render the promises of “mercy to pardon, and of grace to help in every time of need,” precious to thy soul. It will help to regulate thy path through life, and diminish the terrors of death.

Finally, habitual and rooted impressions of a judgment to come, will serve as a support under the rash censures and the unjust decisions of men. From the strife of tongues, from the hatred of a merciless world, you can retire to the silent feast of a conscience void of offence; and with confidence appeal from the angry tribunal of a creature like thyself, to Him who knoweth thy heart, who seeth in secret, and will reward thee openly. “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.” “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?” Behold that “great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and crying with a loud voice, saying, Salvation unto our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” “What are these which are arrayed in white robes?

and whence came they?" "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," Rev. vii. 9, 10, 13—17.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE II.

And they journeyed from mount Hor, by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.—NUMBERS xxi. 4—9.

THE restlessness, peevishness and discontent which men are continually expressing, prove at once the degeneracy and corruption of human nature, and furnish a strong presumption of the immortality of the soul. To behold one generation after another, of mop-

ing, melancholly, sullen, surly beings, in the midst of an overflowing profusion of blessings, charging God foolishly, tormenting themselves unnecessarily, and disturbing others maliciously, clearly demonstrates, that man is alienated from his Maker, at variance with himself, and unkindly disposed towards his brother: in other words, that he is a fallen, corrupted creature. To behold men, whatever they have attained, whatever they possess, forgetting the things which are behind, and eagerly reaching forward to those which are before, the eye never satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, is a presumption at least, if not a proof, that we are designed of our Creator for something this world has not to bestow; that some principle in our nature is superior to the gross and grovelling pursuits in which we are warmly engaged, but in which we take no rest; and thus the very misery we feel is a presentiment of the felicity which we were created to enjoy. But, alas! our dissatisfaction with sublunary good things, “the things which are seen and temporal,” is not the result of experience, nor the resignation of a mind humbled to the will of God. No, it is the miserable effect and expression of insatiable desire, of unmortified pride, of disappointed ambition. If we arrive at our object with ease, its value is diminished by the facility of acquisition; if obstacles lie in the way, and possession be removed by distance of time and space, we are quickly discouraged, and timidly give up the pursuit. When empty, there is no end of our complaints; when full, we loathe and reject the best things: if we succeed, our prosperity destroys us with folly, insolence and self-indulgence; if we fail, we are undone through shame, chagrin and resentment; if we shun in the rock of “vanity” on the one side, we are sucked into the whirlpool of “vexation of spirit” upon the other.

The history of Israel is, in truth, the history of human nature. Did they discover a stubbornness which

no calamity could tame, no kindness could mollify; a levity which no steadiness of discipline could fix, a perfidiousness which no plea can excuse, an ingratitude which no partiality can extenuate, a stupidity which no intelligence can account for, a temerity and a rashness which no reason can explain? Alas, we need not travel to the deserts of Arabia, nor look back to the days of the golden calf, nor to the waters of Maribah, for the persons who discovered such a spirit. We have but to look into our own hearts, we have but to review our own lives, in order to be satisfied, that such a spirit has existed, that it is shamefully odious in itself, highly offensive in the sight of God, and that we have good reason to abhor ourselves, “and repent in dust and ashes.”

We have pursued the history of Aaron and of Balaam, in a continued series, that we might prosecute the remainder of the history of Moses, without any farther interruption; we therefore omitted in its proper place that portion of it, which is partly recorded in the verses I have read: but it is of infinitely too great importance to be passed over wholly in silence, and therefore we look back, and bring it into view, as an useful subject of meditation this evening.

Moses had lately descended from mount Hor, whither he had been summoned to perform the last offices of humanity to Aaron, his brother: with mixed emotions, no doubt, which alternately marked the man and the believer: mourning and mortified, yet patient, composed and resigned to the will of Heaven. In executing sentence of death upon his brother, he heard the voice of God again pronouncing his own doom; a doom in which, with the ordinary feelings of humanity, he acquiesces with reluctance, but must however acquiesce. But though death was before his eyes, and could be at no great distance, it abates nothing of his ardour for the glory of God, and the good of Israel; it breaks in upon no duty of his station, it dis-

turbs not the benevolence, gentleness and serenity of his temper: he lives, acts, instructs to the very last; and exhibits an instructive example of that happy firmness and equanimity of soul, removed alike from stoical indifference, and contempt of death, and fond, infirm, unreasonable attachment to life. We find him accordingly in his one hundred and twentieth year, and the last of his life, not only engaged in employments suitable to age, those of deliberating, advising and instructing; but exerting all the activity and vigour of youth, in planning and executing sundry military enterprises.

We should be surprised, did we not know the cause of it, to find Israel in the fortieth year from their deliverance out of Egypt, just where we saw them the first month, by the way of the Red Sea, journeying from mount Hor; and even then, though every thing seemed to be pressing them forwards to the possession of Canaan, not led of their heavenly Guide directly forwards in the nearest tract, but obliged to fetch a compass round the whole land of Edom, the possession allotted to, and already bestowed upon the posterity of Esau. But Israel, and in them mankind, was thereby instructed to revere the destinations of Providence, to respect the rights, property and privileges of others; that reason and religion, as well as sympathy and humanity, oblige a man to submit to the inconveniency of a journey somewhat more tedious and fatiguing, instead of attempting to cut a nearer passage for himself, through the bowels and blood of his brother.

The consciousness of having acted well, in taking this circuitous march round the land of Edom, and that they thus acted by the command of God, ought to have reconciled the minds of the Israelites to the little inconveniences of the way; but their historian and leader, with his usual fidelity, informs us, that “the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.”

Men frequently do their duty with so ill a grace, that

it becomes as offensive as downright disobedience; the manner of compliance has the air of a refusal, God loves cheerfulness in every thing: a cheerful, liberal giver; a cheerful, thankful receiver; a cheerful, active doer; a cheerful, patient sufferer. And what an alleviating consideration is it, under the pressure of whatever calamity! "This burden is imposed on me by the hand of my heavenly Father; this is a sore evil, but God can turn it into good." "This affliction is not joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards it shall yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness." When we are out of humour at one thing, we are dissatisfied with every person, and every thing; a harsh spirit and a hasty tongue spare neither God nor man. "The people spoke against God, and against Moses. Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread."

Objects viewed through the medium of passion, like those strange uncouth appearances which are seen in glasses of a certain construction, have little or no resemblance to what they are in nature and truth. They are distorted and disfigured; magnified to such a degree as to become hideous, or diminished so as to become imperceptible; and according to the fit of the moment, men turn the one end or the other of the perspective to the eye, and what they contemplate is accordingly removed to a great distance, and reduced to nothing, or brought nigh, enlarged, and brightened up. Employing this false kind of optics, Israel now considers Egypt and all its hardships with desire and regret, and looks forward to Canaan with coldness and distrust. The miraculous stream that followed them from the rock is no water at all, and manna, angel's food, is accounted light bread. We are too little aware of the sinfulness and folly of discontent, and therefore indulge in it without fear or reserve. We do not reflect that it is to arraign at once the wisdom and good-

ness of God; to rob him of the right of judgment, and madly to increase the evil which was too heavy before.

In general, the righteous Governor of the world permits this evil affection to punish itself; and can there be a greater punishment, than to leave a sullen, dissatisfied wretch to devour his own spleen? But in the instance before us, he was provoked to superadd to this mental plague, a grievous external chastisement. "And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died." These might be the natural production of the wilderness, but providentially armed for the occasion with a greater malignancy of poison, or produced in greater abundance, or roused to a higher degree of ferocity. For what are the instruments which God employs to revenge himself of his enemies? He needs not to create a new thing in the earth; the simplest creature can do it. Nature, animate and inanimate, is ready to take up his quarrel; the frost or the fire, continued a little longer, or rendered a little more intense, will soon subdue the proudest of his adversaries. It is not the least of the miracles of divine mercy, that Israel had been preserved so long from the fury of those noxious insects with which the desert swarmed, as Moses justly remarks in recapitulating the history of God's goodness to that people during a forty years pilgrimage. "Lest thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of of flint," Deut. viii. 14, 15.

The rage of these dreadful creatures, which had been during so long a period by a supernatural power suppressed, now freed from that curb, becomes a party too strong for a mighty host, flushed with recent vic-

tory. While therefore we adore and admire the goodness which multiplies the necessary and useful part of the vegetable and animal tribes with such astonishing liberality, and limits those which are noxious with such consummate wisdom and irresistible power, let us tremble to think how easily he can remove the barrier which restrains the wrath of the creature, and arm a fly with force sufficient for our destruction. But the intention of God in punishing is correction and amendment, not ruin; returning mercy therefore meets the first symptoms of repentance, and a remedy is pointed out the moment that misery is felt; which sweetly discloses to us the meltings of fatherly affection, outrunning and preventing filial wretchedness.

But what strange method of cure have we here? The poison of a serpent counteracted, and its malignity destroyed, not by an external application, not by the virtue of an antidote possessed of certain natural qualities, but by a blessing annexed to the use of an instrument in itself inadequate, and an action of the patient himself, flowing from his own will, and called forth by the appointment and command of God. The author of that excellent book, entitled the Wisdom of Solomon, has a beautiful reference to this story, when he says,

“For when the horrible fierceness of beasts came upon these, and they perished with the stings of crooked serpents, thy wrath endured not for ever. But they were troubled for a small season, that they might be admonished, having a sign of salvation, to put them in remembrance of the commandment of thy law. For he that turned himself towards it, was not saved by the thing that he saw, but by thee, that art the Saviour of all. And in this thou madest thine enemies confess, that it is thou who deliverest from all evil,” Wisdom xvi. 5—8.

But the grand commentary on the history of the fiery serpents is furnished by Christ himself, in his conversation with Nicodemus, the Jewish ruler. “As

Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life," John iii. 14, 15.

From this it is evident that many particulars in the Jewish history and political economy, had an interest and importance which extended far beyond the present moment, or the sensible and obvious appearance of things. And in this particular instance our blessed Lord has furnished us with an instructive example, which ought to serve as a rule, for the application and use of figurative, allegorical, and typical subjects. Here he enters into no detail; pursues no parallel or contrast through a multiplicity of particulars; furnishes no wings to the imagination; but fixing on one great, general view of the subject, renders it thereby more powerful and impressive. He was conversing with a ruler of the Jews; was explaining to him the nature and end of his own mission; was deducing the nature and tendency of the gospel dispensation from the established rites of the Mosaic, and the received facts of the Jewish history, with which Nicodemus was perfectly well acquainted. In this case he refers to a noted event, and appeals from it to one which was shortly to take place, betwixt which a striking line of resemblance should be apparent.—The elevation of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, for the healing of the Israelites who were perishing by the envenomed stings of the fiery serpents—and the elevation of the Son of Man upon the cross, the propitiation for the sins of the world; that when this last display of the divine justice and mercy should be exhibited, Nicodemus, and every intelligent and honest disciple of Moses, might be satisfied that "God had at sundry times, and in divers manners," presented as in a glass to the fathers, the method of redemption by Jesus Christ.

All the application, then, which the words of the Saviour himself warrant us to make of this passage to

him, is reduced to a few obvious and striking particulars. "Fools," such as the Isaelites in the desert, and transgressors of the divine law in general, "because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near to the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions," Psalm cvii. 17—20.

The root of the evil, the cause of the plague, is to be found in human perversity and disobedience. The faithful and obedient sleep safe and secure in the lion's den; to the proud and rebellious the innoxious worm is converted into a fiery serpent, full of deadly poison. The remedy for this sore evil is to be traced up to the divine compassion, power and goodness.

The means of cure are not such as human wisdom would have devised, or the reason of man approved; they are the sovereign appointment of Heaven. The effect is preternatural, yet real; and reason rejoices in what it could not have discovered. The sight of a lifeless serpent of metal working as an antidote to the mortal poison of one alive; incredible, absurd! Such was the doctrine of the cross in the eyes of prejudice, and philosophy, "and science, falsely so called." "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the

Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. i. 18—24.

The virtue flowed from the divine appointment, operating together with the believing act of the patient. To the sufferer who averts his face, or wilfully and contemptuously shuts his eyes, that banner is displayed in vain; no virtue issues from it, he perishes in his unbelief. To the despiser, the impenitent, the careless, Christ has died in vain. In the extension of all God's acts of grace to men, to produce the full effect, there must of necessity be an unity of design and exertion between the giver and the receiver, between him who acts and him who is acted upon. Man's body is "dust of the ground," mere matter, separated from the spirit, incapable of motion or direction. Even that active, penetrating organ, the eye, is but a little lump of pelucid clay, till the vital principle, the breath of God, kindle its fires, and direct its rays. It is this vital principle which, proceeding from God, exists in him, and possesses the power of rising and returning to him. The believing Israelite hears, in dying agonies, the proclamation of deliverance, lifts up his drooping head, looks, and is healed; his will meets the will of God, and the cure is already performed. The perishing sinner hears the voice of the Son of God and lives. Lifted up upon the cross he utters his voice, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else," Isai. xlv. 22. One of his fellow sufferers hardens his heart and reviles him, turns from the Saviour with disdain, and dies impenitent—the other hears with rapture the joyful sound, clings to the hope of salvation, prays in faith, and passes with him into paradise.

But the circumstance on which Christ chiefly rests, is Moses "*lifting up* the serpent in the wilderness."

Moses probably had not a clear apprehension of the extensive meaning and import of the act he was performing, any more than the dying men who were the subjects of the cure. They looked no farther than the present moment, and for relief from a malady which affected the body. But, like the high-priest in latter times, they were prophesying, without being conscious of it. He was erecting, and the congregation in the wilderness contemplating an anticipated representation of the great medium of salvation, which God had appointed from the foundation of the world; and had, in a variety of other predictions, circumstantially declared and described at different periods to mankind. These predictions were slumbering unnoticed, neglected, misunderstood, even by the wise and prudent, in the sacred volume a dead letter, till Christ, their quickening spirit, gave them life and motion, and a meaning which they had not before.

In the scene that passed in the wilderness we behold the shadow of good things to come, a prefiguration of the death which Christ should die. He is here “evidently set forth crucified before us,” according to his own words, descriptive of “the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me,” John xii. 32.

This same idea, we have just observed, had been suggested by the evangelical prophet Isaiah, and a similar expression is put into the Saviour’s mouth by that harbinger of the Prince of Peace. “Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.”

And in another place, speaking of gospel times, “At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel,” Isai. xvii. 7.

Thus was Moses, by what he did, and Isaiah, by what he wrote, pointing out to the world one and the

same great object, Christ Jesus, the end of the law for righteousness; the substance of the types; the accomplishment of prophecy and promise; the bruiser of the serpent's head; the restorer of defaced, defiled, degraded humanity. And thus we are taught to regard with peculiar respect, an event which Providence has, in so many different ways, rendered illustriously conspicuous; the death of Christ, on the accursed tree.

We shall have exhibited to you all that Moses and the prophets, all that the historian and the evangelist have suggested, on the subject of the brazen serpent, when we have led your attention to the impious and idolatrous use made of it in after times. That this illustrious instrument of Israel's deliverance in the wilderness, should be carefully preserved, as a monument of the divine power and goodness, and by length of time acquire venerability and respect among the other valuable memorials of antiquity, is not to be wondered at. But every thing may be perverted; and a corrupt disposition has ever manifested itself in man, to exalt into the place of God, something that is not God. Accordingly we find, about eight centuries from its original fabrication, even in the days of Hezekiah, the brazen serpent exalted to divine honours; and a besotted people rendering that homage to the mean, which was due only to the hand which employed it. The zeal of that pious prince, therefore, is worthy of commendation, who, in reforming the abuses of religion, which prevailed at the time that he mounted the throne of Judah, abolished this among the rest. Regardless of the purpose for which it was at first framed; of the venerable hand which formed and reared it, and of the lapse of so many years which had stamped respect upon it, "he brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it *Nehushtan*," 2 Kings xviii. 4, by way of contempt—*a piece of brass*.

On this part of the history of Moses, Pagan antiquity has founded the fabulous history of Esculapius, the pretended God of Medicine, whose symbol was a serpent twisted round a rod. The learned have, through a variety of particulars, traced the derivation of the fable from the fact; but to repeat them, would rather minister to curiosity than to instruction and improvement. We dismiss the subject, then, with this general remark, that in more respects than is commonly apprehended, and than it has had the candour to acknowledge, is Pagan literature indebted to the sacred volume; that the wisdom of Egypt, of Babylon, of Greece and of Rome is traceable up to this source; that Moses is, of course, to be considered as the father of profane, as of sacred learning, from whom all subsequent historians, legislators, orators and poets have derived the lights which directed them in their several pursuits; that to the pure source of all wisdom, the revelation from heaven, in a word, the world is indebted for the first principles of science, morality and religion; which appear to the attentive and discerning eye through the mist in which credulous ignorance or bold fiction have involved them.

Let us hence be encouraged to revere the scriptures, to search and compare them; to derive our opinions of religious subjects from that sacred source, instead of forcing the truth of God into an awkward supporter of our preconceived opinions. Above all, let it be our concern to regulate our conduct by the laws which scripture has laid down, and to comfort our hearts by the hope it inspires, and the prospects which it has unfolded. Amen.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE III.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes: that is the water of Meribah in Kadesh, the wilderness of Zin.—NUMB. XXVII. 12, 13, 14.

THERE is something peculiarly interesting in hearing a plain, honest, intelligent man, without vanity, or self-sufficiency, or affected humility, talking of himself; going into the detail of his own history, with the same fidelity and simplicity as if it were the history of a stranger; unfolding his heart without reserve, disclosing his faults and infirmities without palliation, recording his wise and virtuous actions without ostentation; and relating events, with all their little circumstances, according to the feelings which they excited at the moment.

It is pleasant to see an old man, with his faculties unimpaired, his spirits cheerful, his temper sweet, his conscience clear, his prospects bright; enjoying life without fearing death; blending the modesty and benevolence of youth with the wisdom and dignity of age. There is double satisfaction in hearing such an one de-

scribe persons whom he knew, scenes in which he acted, expeditions which he conducted, schemes which he planned and executed.

And such an one was Moses, who having, by divine inspiration, made the ages and generations before the flood to pass in review, and unfolded the history of redemption, in its connexion with the system of nature and the ways of Providence, during a period of two thousand five hundred years; having admitted us to his familiarity and friendly instruction during an eventful life of one hundred and twenty years, is now, with the same calmness and ease, admitting us to contemplate his behaviour in the immediate prospect, and up to the very hour of his death.

The idolatrous defection of Israel in the plains of Moab, had been visited with a plague which swept away twenty-four thousand of them. Immediately on the staying of that terrible calamity, Moses is commanded, with the assistance of Eleazar the high priest, to take the number of the people, from twenty years old and upwards, and to compare the muster roll of the day, with that taken in the wilderness of Sinai, thirty-eight years before. This being done with all possible accuracy, two most singular facts turn up, each singular considered separately and by itself, and both most singular, taken in their connexion one with another. In a multitude so great, and at the distance of thirty-eight years, the whole difference is no more than one thousand eight hundred and twenty men: for, at the former period, the number of men of a military age was six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty; and at the latter, six hundred and one thousand seven hundred and thirty. But though the strength of the host was nearly the same, the individuals whereof it was composed were totally changed; two names alone of so many myriads stood upon both lists. Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun, for Moses himself was under sentence of con-

demnation; he was not to be permitted to pass over Jordan; he was already numbered with the dead.

The course of nature, it is true, is continually producing a similar effect on the human race, upon the whole; but there is a degree of exactness in this instance, not to be accounted for on common principles, and which must be resolved into a special interposition of Providence, which had pronounced the doom of death on the whole body of offenders, in the moment of transgression, and at the same instant, promised the reward of fidelity and obedience to those illustrious two; longevity and the possession of Canaan. Vain therefore is the hope of so much as one guilty person escaping in a crowd, groundless the fear of singular goodness suffering in the midst of many wicked.

It is related of Xerxes, king of Persia, much to the honour of his humanity, that surveying from an eminence the vast army with which he was advancing to the invasion of Greece, he burst into tears to think that in less than one hundred years they should all be cut off from the land of the living. What then, O Moses, were the emotions of thy soul, to see the event which Xerxes but anticipated, realized before thine eyes? To walk through the ranks of Israel without meeting one man who followed thee out of Egypt, with whom thou couldst mingle the tears of sympathy over so many fallen, or remind of the joy and wonder of that great deliverance? Is not that man already dead, who has survived all his cotemporaries? A consideration, among many others, powerfully calculated to reconcile the mind to the thoughts of dissolution, and to impress on the soul the sentiment of the wise man concerning the world, "I hate it, I would not live always."

Long life, however, is not the less to be considered as a blessing. The love of it is a constitutional law of our nature; and the promise of it is annexed to the sanctions of the written law, as a motive to obedience: "Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days

may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth the," Exod. xx. 12: and it is here bestowed as a reward on the faithful. Premature death, in like manner, is an object of natural horror, is threatened in anger, and inflicted as a punishment. "The wicked shall not live half his days, and his memory shall rot." In general, a wise and merciful God hides from the eyes of men the era of their departure out of the world. The bitterness of death consists in the foretaste, and the forerunners of that great enemy. That bitterness in its full proportion, was wrung out, and mingled in the cup of Moses. The death of every Israelite was a death-warning to him. He had lately ascended mount Hor with Aaron his brother, stript him of his garments, closed his eyes to his last long sleep, and descended without him; and mount Hor is only a few steps distant from mount Abarim, and his own summons comes at length. He is respited, not pardoned, and a reprieve of forty years is now expired.

It is in that awful, trying hour, we are at this time to trace the character, and mark the behaviour of the man of God.

From the moment he fell under the divine displeasure, which shortened the date of his life, we observe it lying with an oppressive weight upon his mind. The love of life manifests itself, and we behold in the prophet, the man of like passions with ourselves. There is no incident of his life on which he dwells so much, and with such earnestness of interest as this. The history of his offence is again and again repeated, not in the view of extenuating the guilt of it, but to vindicate the righteous judgment of God. The excellence of this part of his narrative, is its departing from the direct line of narration. He hastens forward to bring it early into view; he returns again upon his foot-steps, and presents it a second time to view. Is he reminding Israel of their rebellion and disobedience? his own transgression, and the punishment of it, arise and stare

him in the face. Is he encouraging them in their progress towards the promised land? he sighs to think that he himself shall never enter it. At one time he flatters himself with the hope that justice might perhaps relent, and presumes to expostulate and entreat, in terms earnest and pathetic, such as these; "O Lord God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what god is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon," Deut. iii. 24, 25.

At another time, he seems quietly to give up the cause as lost, and patiently prepares to meet his fate, and meekly resigns himself to the will of the Most High, which he was unable to alter. In a word, we see him at once the man and the believer, and a pattern well worthy of imitation in both respects.

It is impossible to observe the conflict of Moses' soul, when this cup of trembling was put into his hands, without thinking of the bitter agony in the garden, of the travail of the Redeemer's soul, of that passionate address, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me"—of "sweat like great drops of blood falling down to the ground," Luke xxii. 42—44, of the triumph of resignation, "nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done"—of "humiliation to death, the death of the cross." Thus it "behoved him to fulfil all righteousness." Thus he taught men to obey the law of God, to use all lawful endeavours to preserve life; and thus he inculcated submission to that sovereign will which it is unprofitable and impious to resist.

"Get thee up," said God to Moses, "into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel," Num. xxvii. 12, and this is all that the law can do for the guilty; it conducts to an adjoining eminence, it spreads a distant prospect of Canaan, it can display its beauty and fertility;

it can inspire the desire of possession; but it cannot divide Jordan, it cannot lead to victory over the last enemy, it cannot make "the comer thereunto perfect," nor establish the soul in everlasting rest. Neither Moses, the giver of the law, nor Aaron, the high-priest, under the law, could "continue by reason of death." But the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession is "entered into the holiest of all," has opened a passage through the gates of death, to life and immortality; lifted up, first upon the cross, and then to his throne in the heavens, he is drawing all men unto him.

Together with the honest though fond attachment to life, which characterizes the man, and the pious resignation which marks the child of God, Moses discovers, on this occasion, that excellent spirit which sinks and loses the individual in the public. He cheerfully gives up his personal suit, and the cause of Israel henceforth engrosses him wholly. "And Moses spake unto the Lord, saying, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd," Numb. xxvii. 15—17.

Let modern patriots think of this, and blush at their pride and selfishness. But they are lost to all sense of decency, they keep each other in countenance by their multitude and confidence, and "glory in their shame." This noble conduct of the Jewish legislator was not the affectation of virtue and public spirit, the ostentatious boasting of a man who had no prospect, or a distant one, of being put to the trial; but the native greatness and superiority of a mind occupied with two grand objects, the glory of God, and the good of his country; a mind that could rejoice in the advancement of an inferior, and decrease with inward satisfaction, while the other increased. Ordinary men look

with an evil eye upon their successors. A prince and his heir, though that heir be his own son, generally live upon indifferent terms; but Moses sees his dignity departing from himself in his life-time, departing from his family, given to his servant, without a murmur, without a sigh. It was enough to him that God had been pleased to adopt Joshua, for the purpose of finishing his work, of introducing Israel into their inheritance. It is no sooner intimated to him, than Joshua becomes his son, his brother, his friend: and he proceeds to his installation with as much alacrity, as he invested Aaron with the pontifical robes.

This solemn ceremony consisted of a variety of circumstances, which are well worthy of our attention; from their being of divine appointment, from their great antiquity, from their inexplicable mysteriousness, or their obvious significancy. Joshua was already anointed with the unction of the Spirit: he was a person of singular piety, undaunted resolution, and unshaken fidelity: he had long attended upon Moses as his minister, had accompanied him into the mount, when he ascended to meet God, had traversed the land of Canaan as one of the spies, had brought up its good report, and stood firm with Caleb in resisting the timid and discouraging representations of his colleagues. He possessed all the qualities natural, acquired, and miraculously dispensed, which were requisite to the discharge of the duties of that high and important station to which Providence was now calling him. By the spirit which is said to have been in Joshua, some understand the spirit of prophecy, or supernatural powers of foreseeing and providing for future events. By taking in every circumstance, it seems rather to denote those rare gifts with which nature had so liberally endowed him, wisdom, and courage, and strength, and which Providence was now calling forth for the general benefit. But though thus amply furnished for his great undertaking, God was pleased to com-

mand a solemn and public declaration of his choice, and that the object of it should, before the eyes of the people, be set apart by the imposition of the hands of Moses to the office assigned him.

Forms are necessary, because men are not spiritual; forms are interposed, that the understanding, the heart and the conscience may be approached through the channels of sense. And of all forms, recommended by divine authority, and its own significant simplicity, that of the laying on of hands is one of the most ancient, most frequently in use, and most striking. By this solemn rite, the devoted victim was set apart for death, and the guilt of the offerer transferred, as it were, and laid upon the head of the oblation: and thus were the minister of the sanctuary, the general, the statesman, dedicated to the duties of their respective stations: thus new and extraordinary powers were conferred upon Joshua: thus Jesus took leave of his disciples, and left a blessing behind him, more precious than the mantle of Elijah. "He led them out as far as Bethany: and he lifted up his hands and blessed them," Luke xxiv. 50.

By laying on of the apostles' hands, miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost were communicated; and by laying on of the hands of the presbytery, Timothy was solemnly set apart for exercising the office of a bishop; and thus a great part of the christian world continues to instal its ministers in the pastoral office.

Moses was farther commanded "to cause Joshua to stand before Eleazar the priest," who was probably to offer up sacrifice in behalf of the commander elect, and by this additional solemnity to impress both upon his own mind and upon those of the spectators, the weight and importance of the sacred charge committed unto him. It is added, verse 20th, "And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient."

This is interpreted by some commentators, of those

rays of glory, which are supposed to have surrounded the head of Moses, ever since his descent from God in the mount, and which so dazzled the eyes of the beholder, that in speaking to the people he was under the necessity of putting a veil over his face. By the imposition of his hands upon the head of Joshua, according to the commandment, this external, sensible honour is understood to have been communicated from the one to the other, and that, in consequence of it, Joshua henceforth wore a visible token of the choice of Heaven.

Conjecture and fancy blend too much in this exposition, to procure for it a very high degree of respect. Juster and more sober criticism explain the passage as implying, that Moses should immediately associate Joshua with himself in the executive powers of government, devolve upon him a share both of the respect and the care which pertained to the supreme command; that he might enjoy the satisfaction, while he yet lived, and which he so much desired, of beholding a wise and good man conducting the Israelitish affairs, in church and state, with discretion, and carrying on the plan of Providence to its consummation.

There is another article in the injunction laid upon Moses, respecting the appointment of his successor, which has greatly exercised and puzzled the critics. "And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him, after the judgment of Urim, before the Lord; at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation," Numb. xxvii. 21.

The difficulty is, what was the Urim, and the judgment of Urim, of which Eleazar was to ask counsel in behalf of Joshua, and wherein Moses differed from Joshua as to this? Urim is, in general, in scripture, found in connexion with Thummim. The words import *light* and *perfection*; and they appear to have

been some part or appendage of the breast-plate, that essential article of the high-priest's dress. They were not, it is alleged, the production of human skill, like the other particulars of the sacred clothing, for there is no account of their fabrication by the hands of man; but when the breast-plate was finished, Moses, we are told, "put into it the Urim and the Thummim," whatever they were, immediately from God.

The method of consultation has also furnished ample matter of dispute. The most approved tradition is this, for scripture gives but few, and those very general hints, upon the subject, the person who desired to consult the oracle (and none but public persons, and on great public occasions, were admitted to that privilege) intimated his intention to the high-priest; who, at the hour of incense, arrayed in his pontifical vestments, entered the holy place, accompanied at a little distance by the magistrate or general, who made the inquiry. The high-priest placed himself with his face towards the entrance of the most holy place. The veil which separated the holy place from the holy of holies, was drawn up for the occasion, so that he stood directly fronting the ark of the covenant, overshadowed by the cherubim, where the Schechinah, or visible glory, resided. The inquirer then standing behind, pronounced the question, or consultation, in a few plain words; such for example as these, "Shall I go up against the Philistines, or shall I not go up?" This question was again repeated solemnly and distinctly by the high-priest before the Lord: and on looking downwards upon the Urim in the breast-plate, the answer of God was seen in characters of reflected light, from the excellent glory, and which the high-priest audibly repeated in the ears of the party concerned "Go;" or, "Thou shalt not go."

When the oracle refused to give any response, as in the case of Saul, it was considered as a mark of high displeasure. God would not answer that wicked prince.

“by the judgment of Urim,” but because he had wilfully forsaken God, an offended God, in just displeasure, gave him up to ask counsel of hell, and to follow it to his own destruction. “We have also,” christians, “a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts,” 2 Pet. i. 19.

Joshua being referred to this mode of consultation, compared with the history of Moses, points out the difference between these two leaders of Israel. “There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face,” Deut. xxxiv. 10.

God manifested himself immediately unto Moses; conversed with him as a man with his friend. Joshua was kept at a greater distance, and enjoyed communion with God through the intervention of appointed means. Just as before Moses was admitted to the very summit of the mount, received within the veil of thick darkness, which at once concealed and revealed the divine glory; while Joshua was confined to a lower region, kept in the place and on the duty of a servant. But we must conclude.

The whole scene that has now passed in review, speaks directly to the heart and conscience. It presents a striking and instructive instance of the goodness and severity of God. The faults and infirmities of his dearest children he neither overlooks, nor forgets to punish. For one offence, and seemingly a slight one, Moses is excluded from Canaan. No humiliation, penitence or entreaty can, of themselves, remove the guilt nor prevent chastisement of sin. The neglect or insult offered by a child, a brother, a friend, strikes deeper than the most violent outrage from a stranger, or an avowed enemy. The transgression of Moses at the waters of strife was thus aggravated, and he must die for it. O my God, enter not into judgment with me, whose crimes are heightened

by every circumstance of aggravation—deliberation, presumption, filial ingratitude, in the face of solemn and repeated engagements. If Moses died the death, for once speaking unadvisedly with his lips, in the moment of passion; “if thou, Lord, art strict to mark iniquity, where shall I stand?” how shall I escape?

But is death a punishment to a good man? No. As in the death of Moses, therefore, we behold the justice and severity of God, so, in its consequences, we behold his goodness and loving kindness. The evil is slight and temporary; the good is unspeakably great, and eternally permanent; exclusion from Canaan is admission into the kingdom of heaven; “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” Faith, indeed, redeems not from the power of the grave, but it dissipates all the horror of the tomb; transforms it into a resting place for the weary pilgrim; and converts the king of terrors into a minister of joy. “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” “The saying that is written, is come to pass, death is swallowed up of victory; mortality is swallowed up of life.” “Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel.” We “know whom we have believed:” we believe in him who hath said, “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.”

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE IV.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people.—NUMB. xxxi. 1, 2.

THE interest which every reader of taste and sensibility takes in the life and actions of Moses is never permitted to flag, much less totally to sink and expire. His infant cries, from the very first moment, awaken our sympathy; and his departing words, at the age of a hundred and twenty years, continue to excite our esteem and admiration. Whether employed as a minister of vengeance or of mercy, he inspires affection or commands respect.

The love of life is not only natural and innocent, but important and necessary. We are instructed to guard, to preserve, to prolong it, at once by the constitution and frame of our nature, and by manifold examples of the highest authority. And while Providence permits the farther extension of it, the reasons and end of that extension are obviously manifest. Not a single hour is added to the life of any one, merely to make up such a quantity of time. No, every moment is destined to its peculiar purpose, passes to account, calls to its proper use and employment. To dream of premature retirement from the exercise of our faculties and functions, of mere existence without employment, is an attempt to defeat the intention of the Creator in sending us into the world; is a degradation and preversion of the powers

of the human mind; is to be dead while we live. The inquiry of a well regulated spirit, to the last, is, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" While any of my powers remain, however blunted, however impaired, to whom shall I dedicate the poor remains? Enfeebled, exhausted as I am, is there no one respect in which I can yet glorify God, or be useful to my fellow creatures? And, to the last, the great Supporter of life, the Ruler of the world, has some command to give, some labour to be performed, some exercise of the hand, the head, or the heart to enjoin, some purpose of justice or of love to accomplish.

Moses has received warning to depart, but the hour of release is not yet come. And though his offence at the waters of Meribah must be punished with death, the tranquillity of his mind is not thereby discomposed, nor his intercourse with Heaven interrupted, nor his zeal in performing the duties of his station abated. The God whom he had so long and faithfully served, continues to converse with him as a man with his friend, communicates to him his designs, and employs him in the execution. Our lives too are forfeited; the sentence of death is upon us; under a respite of unknown, uncertain duration, our days are passing away. Improved ever so well, they cannot indeed redeem from the grave, nor alter the immutable decree; but their improvement may alleviate the bitterness of death, and pluck out the sting. The inevitable course of nature, and the righteous decisions of a holy law, destroy not the sacred communications which subsist between a merciful God and a gracious spirit. To receive a command from an offended father, after judgment has been pronounced, partakes of the nature of a pardon; and it is no slender consolation, even under the stroke of justice, to reflect that paternal affection was pleased to regard and accept future obedience and submission, if not as an atonement for offence, at least as a mark of contrition for having transgressed. As

if, therefore, we could wipe out the memory of the past; as if persevering labours of gratitude and love could purchase our release; as if death were to be prevented, disarmed or destroyed, by the efforts of the passing moment, let us awake and arise to the knowledge, the study and the practice of our heavenly Father's will.

The service prescribed to Moses on this occasion was the execution of justice on a nation of offenders. The nature of the offence has been hinted at in a former Lecture; and we may form a judgment of its enormity, from the vengeance which pursued it. The state of Midian, at the period in question, exhibits the last stage of moral depravity—a corrupted people carrying on a temporary political design, by means the most scandalous and dishonorable—the dearest and most delicate interests of human nature vilely sacrificed to its worst and most disgraceful propensities—husbands countenancing the prostitution of their wives, and parents that of their daughters, in order to gratify ambition, avarice or revenge. A nation of such a character is necessarily hastening to utter destruction, without fire from heaven, or the sword of a foreign enemy. But what vice was accelerating by its own native energy, Providence hastens to an issue by a special interposition, and “the Lord makes himself known by the judgment which he executes.”

The force which it was thought proper to employ for the extermination of this debauched race, is indication sufficient how low its character was rated. Immersed in sensuality, enervated by luxury, a handful of men was deemed enough to destroy them. A thousand out of every tribe of Israel, twelve thousand men in all, Moses considers as fully competent to the execution of this enterprize; and the event fully justified the estimate he had made. It is likewise remarkable, that he neither commands in this expedition, in person, nor commits the conduct of it to Joshua, or any other of military profession: but to “Phineas, the son of

Eleazar the priest," furnished "with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow, in his hand." We have here, therefore, the idea of a solemn public execution, rather than of regular war. No resistance is made, no blood but that of the criminals is shed; they dare not meet in the field those whom in the secret chambers they could ensnare. In vain their hoary adviser Balaam, urges them to feats of arms, and sets them an example of courage; supported by five kings and their armies, he falls together with them, by the sword of Israel, an awful monument, how certainly, however slowly, eternal justice overtakes the sinner!

The immense booty which this easy victory transferred to the Israelites, is a farther demonstration of the feebleness and dissolution of their unwarlike enemy. They had wealth without being rich, luxury without enjoyment, policy without wisdom, kingly power without government, and zeal for religion without an object of worship. Conquered the moment they are attacked, having no resource in public or private virtue; men lost to a sense of what constitutes true female dignity, women precipitating that corruption of which they were the miserable victims—they hold up to mankind a fearful but instructive example of the native, necessary, inevitable consequences of vice. Up to similar causes the downfall of still greater states may be traced; and if sin be the ruin of any kingdom, what individual offender shall dare to flatter himself with the hope of escaping the righteous judgment of God?

The severity with which judgment was executed on the Midianites, helps farther to unfold their character. An effeminate, luxurious people, generally excites contempt at most; but here a holy and just indignation is kindled. Heaven itself is up in arms against a degenerate race; and Moses, the meekest of men, accuses the exterminators of the whole race of Midian of weak and excessive lenity. How is this to be accounted for? It will be found on inquiry, that

in a very dissolute state of society, vices of the most odious and atrocious kind are necessarily blended with others less offensive. The love of pleasure is the predominant character; but in order to feed and support that passion, arts the most criminal and detestable must be employed. Injustice, violence, perjury and murder follow in the train of lust. The moral principle is destroyed: all sense of shame is lost. The general depravity keeps every individual transgressor in countenance. Appearances are no longer attended to or kept up. Men glory in their shame. The very offices of religion are perverted into instruments of debauchery. Such, apparently, was the state of Midian at the period under review; such was that of Israel during the government and priesthood of Eli; and such was that of the Assyrian and Roman empires immediately previous to their subversion. And in such a state, is it any wonder to see heaven and earth combined to root out and overthrow—a holy and righteous God employing the ministration of the gentlest of mankind to cut off the name and memory of such a people from the earth? When punishment so signal is inflicted, we may safely infer, that the guilt which provoked it from such hands was enormous.

On reviewing the little army of Israel, after the victory, a fact turns up unequalled in the history of mankind—not so much as one of the twelve thousand has fallen in battle: and that in attacking and destroying a nation so populous as to contain “thirty-two thousand females of a particular description,” Numb. xxxi. 35. The hand of God was clearly visible in this, and thankfully acknowledged. The superfluous ornaments which lately published the shame of Midian, now proclaim the piety and gratitude of Israel; and become part of the sacred treasury of the tabernacle. Every creature of God is good in itself, and intended to do good. Use the world so as not to abuse it, and the Creator is glorified. Every day added to our life is as much a miracle

of mercy, as the preservation of every individual of the twelve thousand in the day of battle. Let our gratitude declare itself in an habitual devotedness of heart and life, to the God of our life, and the length of our days; let us present our "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service: and be transformed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Rom. xii. 1, 2.

In the punishment inflicted on Midian, we behold a righteous God prosecuting an injury done to Israel, as an insult offered to himself. And indeed every offence against society is a direct attack of the divine authority, which has fenced the person, the fame and the virtue of our neighbour on every side, against all the assaults, whether of violence or deceit. The character and conduct, in connexion with the untimely end of the arch seducer Balaam, are an awful and instructive instance of the justice of God in making signal guilt its own avenger, and furnish a striking illustration of the observations made by the psalmist and his wise son; "Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate. I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness; and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high," Psal. vii. 14—17. "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands," Psal. ix. 15, 16. "For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings. His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. He shall die without instruction: and in the greatness of his folly we shall go astray," Prov. v. 21—23.

—In the faint resistance made by the Midianites to a force so small, we behold the native tendency of vice to enfeeble and enervate. Sunk in effeminacy and sloth, they are overcome as soon as attacked. Strong in cunning, they are destitute of true wisdom, and defective in valour. The foe that assaults, that conquers them, is within. “The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous is as bold as a Lion.” Addictedness to the pleasures of sense gradually, though insensibly, encroaches on all the nobler principles of our nature, undermines and subverts them. Every spring of the soul is relaxed through disuse; the bodily powers become languid, and the sluggish giant becomes an easy prey to the active and vigorous child. Exercise your faculties, and they will increase and improve; neglect them, and they will quickly fall into utter decay. Fear God, maintain “a conscience void of offence,” and bid defiance to what earth and hell can do against you.

—In the free-will offering of these grateful Israelites for protection and deliverance in the day of battle, behold a laudable example of attention to the ways of Providence, and of thankful acknowledgment of them. Let friends, after the days of separation are at an end, after the hour of danger is past, reckon their numbers. Do they remain entire, not one missing, is no allay mingled with the joy of re-union? It was the hand of God that supported; he “gave his angels charge concerning you.” “He covered you with his feathers; his truth was your shield and buckler; no evil befel you, no plague came nigh your dwelling.” “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; offer unto him thanksgiving, honour him with your substance;” present “the calves of your lips,” the devotedness of your hearts, the obedience of your lives.

—Does the punishment of this people appear to any rigorous and excessive? Let them consider that they are very incompetent judges of God’s moral govern-

ment; that they see but a few scattered fragments of the vast scheme of Providence; that creatures themselves ignorant, weak and criminal, must be much disqualified to “hold the balance and the rod;” that every transgression of the divine law merits death; that “fools” only “make a mock at sin.” Let the whole earth tremble before Him “who will by no means clear the guilty:” who has denounced “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish against every soul of man that doeth evil,” while to the humble and contrite in heart, he proclaims his name, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin,” Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7, “visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the *third* and *fourth* generation of them who hate him; but showing mercy to *thousands* of them that love him and keep his commandments,” Exod. xx. 5, 6.

—In the leader and commander of Israel behold, once more, a man exalted far above all temporary, all selfish concern; occupied only with the interest of truth and justice, the duties of his station, the prosperity of his charge, the glory of Him who had conferred it upon him. In this last object his whole soul is absorbed. He walks already on air, and beholds the world under his feet; but forgets not that he is yet in it, and that in every state, and at every period of existence, a rational being may promote, and ought to be studying how he may best promote, the honour of his Creator, by administering justice, or extending mercy to his fellow-creatures. Consider him well; and, in your sphere, with the means and ability you enjoy, go and do likewise—and God grant us all wisdom to know and do what is well-pleasing in his sight.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE V.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come over Jordan, into the land of Canaan, then ye shall appoint you cities, to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares. And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment. And of these cities which ye shall give, six cities shall ye have for refuge. Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge. These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them: that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither.—NUM. xxxv. 9—15.

HUMAN laws are generally the result of experience, not the provision of foresight. Occasion dictates the encouragement to be given, the restraint to be imposed, the punishment to be inflicted. The multiplication of new and extraordinary cases, must of course swell the statute book; through change of circumstances some institutes must sink into disuse and oblivion, and others rise into existence and force. Hence the variety, the opposition, the contradiction of

different codes of law, not only in different countries, but in the same country at different periods.

There are, at the same time, certain general and fixed principles of law applicable to every state of society; which, founded in eternal, unchangeable truth and justice, are in perpetual force, and of universal obligation. Divested of every thing arbitrary, local and temporary, they address themselves to the understanding and conscience of every man, and irresistibly carry conviction with them. The genius, character and progress of any people, a sagacious observer will be able to trace, with tolerable accuracy, in their legislation, in their institutions, political and religious; for those of a moral tendency never vary. It is easy to discern in the spirit of the laws, what is the spirit of the nation; to discern whither liberty or despotism, moderation or tyranny is predominant.

But the constitution of the commonwealth of Israel possesses distinctive features. It was formed by divine Wisdom long before it had a local residence wherein to act. The laws by which Canaan was to be governed, were enacted in the wilderness. Prescience made provision for cases which could not as yet have arisen. Republican equality was blended with absolute unlimited theocracy; a liberty and a sovereignty established in perfect harmony, and yet both to their utmost extent. The Levitical part of the constitution was adapted to this state of things. The priesthood, in respect of property and possession, was reduced below the level of their brethren; while by their office and employments, the homage paid and the provision made for them, they were raised above their fellows. They were appointed to minister at the altar of God; and it was his will, and it was reasonable, that they should live by it.

One of the last public services in which Moses was employed, is the settlement of this branch of the political economy—the establishment of religion, with-

out which no state can long exist; and the appointment of a moderate, but certain and steady provision for its ministers.

Forty and eight cities, in all, with their suburbs, and an extent of territory around every one, not exceeding two thousand cubits, in all directions, were to be set apart for the tribe of Levi, and distributed by lot. As the lot was specially ordered by divine Providence, the dispersion of this tribe over the whole land, there is good reason to believe, God in wisdom overruled favourably to the exercise of their sacred function. Of their other privileges and immunities, we are not now led to treat. The words we have read limit our attention to an institution, in many respects singular, and unexampled in the history of mankind—the appointment of six of the Levitical cities, as places of refuge for the unintentional, and therefore less criminal manslayer. Respecting this institution, and its reason and design, the following particulars recommend themselves to our notice.

The provision here made refers to a case of singular importance to society; on which indeed the very being of society depends—the security of human life against violence. To take away the life of another is the most atrocious offence which man can commit against man. The laws of every well-regulated community have accordingly marked it as the object of just vengeance, saying, in the language of the supreme Legislator, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” But into the commission of this offence, as of every other, circumstances of aggravation or alleviation may enter; and every wise legislator will take these into consideration; adapting the degree of punishment to the degree of criminality, distinguishing the action, as connected with, or separated from the intention. To the wilful and deliberate murderer no place was to serve as a sanctuary; to him the altar itself was to afford no protection. But a man

may deprive his neighbour of life without incurring the guilt of murder; and it must be imputed to him as a calamity, not a crime. To meet such a case, the provision in question was made; and a refuge was provided for both the citizen and the stranger who might "un-awares," without malice or intention, occasion the death of another.

This refuge, however, was not wholly unrestricted, but subject to a variety of regulations, all calculated powerfully to impress on the minds of the people, an awful sense of the value put on the life of man by the great Legislator: and to serve as a caution not only against deliberate violence, but even against carelessness and inattention, where the life of another was concerned. Blood lies heavily, as it ought, on the head of him who sheddeth it, however innocently; and the consciousness of it will ever be felt as a severe punishment by a sensible heart, though no judge arise to avenge it. But punishment to a certain degree was inflicted on the manslayer, by the very statute which appointed the refuge; and to the uneasy reflections arising from having been the unwilling instrument of a man's death, were superadded alarming apprehensions and painful restraints.

The first regulation limited the number of these cities to six, for the whole commonwealth of Israel. Hence, an escape to a place of refuge must, in many instances, have been effected through much danger, exertion and labour; and the unhappy fugitive must frequently have felt all the bitterness of death in his solicitude to flee from it. Thus, while the finger of mercy pointed to the strong hold of safety, the voice of justice exclaimed, "Flee for thy life, look not behind thee, lest thou perish; behold the avenger of blood is at thy heels."

But that the danger, and the anxiety resulting from it, might be diminished as far as the limited number of the cities would admit, it was determined by the

lot that these should be dispersed at the most commodious distances, over the country; and it was expressly provided that three of them should be on each side the Jordan, in order to facilitate and secure escape at the seasons when that river overflowed its banks, and rendered a passage tedious, difficult or impracticable. In the same view, it has been affirmed, and seems probable, that the roads which led to these cities were formed and maintained at the public expense, and that their breadth was very considerable: that every obstruction was removed out of the way, bridges were thrown over interposing streams, and when roads happened to cross or separate, an index, inscribed with the word *Refuge*, pointed out the right course. And thus an institution humane in its design, was rendered more so, by the manner in which it was observed.

But again—the city was, in the first instance, to serve only as a temporary refuge, and afforded shelter only till inquiry was made into the fact, and judgment was solemnly given between the manslayer and the avenger of blood, upon evidence adduced. If criminal intention was proved, there was no remedy, blood demanded blood, the prisoner must be delivered up to the hands of justice. If otherwise, public protection was granted, and he was restored to his refuge. The ordinance having it in view not to prevent and suppress the truth, but to bring it openly and fully to light.

The innocence of the prosecuted party having been made clearly to appear, he was restored indeed to his refuge, but it became, at the same time, his prison. Exiled from his native possession, and from all that rendered it dear; doomed to live among strangers, to subsist on their bounty, perhaps to feel their unkindness or neglect, he must drag out a comfortless existence, to an unknown, uncertain period; or stir abroad under constant apprehension and hazard of his life. And confinement is still confinement, though in a place of safety, a city of refuge: and ignorance and uncer-

tainty respecting the termination of our misery, are bitter ingredients in the cup of affliction. "It may outlast life," sad thought! "or consume the best and most valuable portion of my days. Unhappy that I am, to have introduced mourning into my neighbour's family, and desolated my own. Though I feel not the pangs of remorse, my heart is torn with those of regret; and blood, though shed without a crime, is a burden too heavy for me to bear."

The last regulation on record respecting this subject, was a permission to the hapless manslayer to "return into the land of his possession," on the death of the high-priest. The reason of this ordinance does not appear; but it contains a circumstance very affecting to the prisoner himself, and affecting to all Israel. His release from confinement could be purchased only by death, the death of another; and that not of an ordinary citizen, but of the most dignified and respectable character in the republic. The weight of blood innocently shed, was at length to be removed; but how? Not by the demise of him who shed it, but of "the high-priest which should be in those days." And may we not suppose a refugee of sensibility looking forward to this event with the mixed emotions of hope and sorrow? The very cause of his enlargement makes it to partake of the nature of a punishment. He dare hardly wish for liberty, for it involved guilt deeper than what already lay upon his head; deliberately devising the death of his neighbour, and taking pleasure in it.

Now, if guiltless homicide subjected the perpetrator of it to such accumulated danger, anxiety and distress, how atrocious in the sight of God must wilful murder be? And how sacred, in the sight of man, ought to be the life of his brother, and every thing relating to its preservation and comfort, his health, his peace, his reputation? To attack him in any of these respects, is to level a blow at his head, or, where he feels more sensibly still, at his heart.

Let us review this last of the Mosaic institutions, and mark its reference to a clearer and more explicit dispensation: for it too is evidently “a shadow of good things to come.”

—The flying “manslayer” is an affecting representation of what every man is by nature and by wicked works; an unhappy creature, who has offended against his brother, violated the laws of society, broken his own peace of mind, and trampled on the divine authority, not only accidentally and unintentionally, but deliberately, presumptuously. His conscience, “like the troubled sea,” cannot rest. What he feels is dreadful, what he fears is infinitely worse. With trembling Cain, he apprehends that every one who meeteth him will slay him; his multiplied crimes cry out of the ground for vengeance upon his head—while eternal, inflexible justice, like “the avenger of blood,” pursues him to the death. To flee from, or endure the wrath of an offended God, is equally impossible. All nature is up in arms against him; he is become a terror to himself; the king of terrors aims his fatal dart, and hell follows after.

—The “refuge” provided by this statute for the unhappy man who had destroyed his brother, and troubled his own soul, prefigures the remedy prescribed by infinite wisdom for the recovery of a lost, perishing world—that dispensation of divine Providence in which “mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” Fear not, guilty creature, there is hope concerning thee: thou shalt not die. The God whom thou hast offended, even he, “hath found out a ransom;” he hath “laid help on One who is mighty to save, even to the uttermost, them who come unto God through him.” Cease from the anxious inquiry, “Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring Christ down from above? Who shall descend into the deep, to bring up Christ again from the dead?” “The word is nigh thee,” and in this word

the Lord “brings near his righteousness,” and his salvation. The name of JEHOVAH is as a strong tower, whoso runneth into it is safe. Prophets, apostles, evangelists, with one accord, point to the sanctuary, saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it.” “Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.” Here is “an high way”—“the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein.” The Saviour himself proclaims, “Look to me, and be saved.” “Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.”

—The very act of flying from “the avenger of blood,” argued a consciousness of criminality, and an apprehension of danger; and the course directed to a city of refuge, indicated a knowledge of its appointment, and of the privileges pertaining to it. In this we behold the character of the convinced, penitent sinner, condemned of his own conscience, stripped of every plea of self-righteousness, alarmed with the terrors of “the wrath to come,” encouraged by the declarations of the mercy of God in Christ, apprehending “salvation in no other,” perceiving no way to escape but this, he flees “for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before him,” even to “Him who is mighty to save;” to that “blood which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel;” to “the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world;” saying, in the words of the Psalmist, “O Lord, thou art my refuge; return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.” In Jehovah alone have I righteousness and strength;” “he also is become my salvation.”

The safety of the manslayer depended, not on having arrived at, but on remaining in the city of his refuge. To leave it prematurely was as fatal as to be overtaken on the way that led to it. The grace of the gospel, in like manner, is extended, not to him who, convinced of sin, and trembling with apprehension of judgment

to come, has fled for refuge, to the great Propitiation for sin, but to him who abideth in Christ. As there is a "believing to the saving of the soul;" so there is a "drawing back unto perdition;" and "no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Hence the solemn injunction and warning of Christ himself, "Abide in me, and I in you—if a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered: and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." "He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved." The great Apostle and High-Priest of our profession lives for ever; there is therefore "no more going out." "In returning and rest shall we be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength."

—The sanctuary provided and opened, equally for the distressed Israelite and "the stranger," is a happy prefiguration of the indiscriminating mercy, the unlimited extension of the gospel salvation. "In Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." He "came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh; and through him, we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father." The gospel of Christ is "the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." It announces "glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." "For there is no respect of persons with God." Blessed dispensation, which hath abolished all invidious distinctions! "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all!" Who art thou then, O man, who "judgest thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?"

He is a man like thyself, a criminal as thou art; for him also Christ died, and for his admission, as for thine, the door of mercy stands open, the city of refuge strengthens its walls, expands its gates.

I conclude with suggesting a few hints, which will serve to evince the glorious superiority of the object prefigured, over the figure; of "the very image of the things," above "the shadow of good things to come." The institution under review was a provision for one particular species of offence and distress, and for a case which could occur but in rarer instances. Indeed the whole history of Israel furnishes not a single one. But the provisions of the "better covenant—established upon better promises," extend to every species, and to every instance of guilt and misery. They are made not only for the heedless and the unfortunate, the weak and the helpless, but for the stout-hearted and presumptuous, for deliberate offenders and backsliding children, for the very chief of sinners. Whatever, O man, be thy peculiar "weight, and the sin that doth more easily beset thee;" whatever "the plague of thine heart," or the error of thy life, behold "help laid for thee on One mighty to save." "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Hear, and accept his kind invitation, "Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth." "Him that cometh I will in no wise cast out." The cities of Israel served as a temporary reprieve from a sentence of death, which, though the hand of the "avenger" was restrained, the hand of nature was speedily to execute. The manslayer might be overtaken by it, in the very city of his refuge. But the believer's security under the gospel never fails, never terminates. He is "passed from death unto life;" he "shall never perish." "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is

God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that dieth, yea rather that is risen again." "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand: my Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Under the law, the death of the high-priest, the final era of release to the manslayer, was an event entirely casual, often distant, always uncertain. Under the gospel, that death, which is the sinner's deliverance, the soul's ransom, is an event for ever present, perpetually producing its effect. Christ, "by one offering, hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." "This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood."

"We ought, therefore, to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we let them slip." For if the intentional murderer was to be dragged from God's altar, to suffer the punishment of his crime; and if the manslayer, who despised and neglected his refuge, fell a just sacrifice to the resentment of "the avenger of blood," and to his own presumption and neglect of the merciful ordinance of God; "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" "For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. x. 28, 29. 26, 27. 31. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is

near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," Isai. lv. 6, 7. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation," 2 Cor. vi. 2. "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel," Jer. iii. 22, 23.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE VI.

And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the Lord had given him in commandment unto them.—DEUT. i. 3.

“Where is that thrift, that avarice of time,
O glorious avarice! the thought of death inspires?”

YOUNG.

BEHOLD this honourable thrift, this glorious avarice, exemplified in that most amiable and excellent of mankind, Moses, the man of God, who has condescended to be so long our instructor and our guide. He is now in the last month of his earthly existence; he is “ready to be offered up; the time of his departure is at hand;” and an illustrious instance his last days exhibits of how much may be done in a little time. Within the compass of that month, that little month, all the words of this book were spoken in the ears of all Israel, and were committed to writing. The decree, the irreversible decree had gone forth, he knew that he must die; he therefore sets himself to redeem the time, and seeing his days are now few, not one of them shall be spent in vain.

The tide which carried him along to the world of spirits, is hastening to finish our course, to add us to the number of those who were, but are no more. Another month, a little month, must close our review of the life and writings of Moses. A still shorter period may close our worldly career; and when we part, it is to meet no more, till "the dead, small and great, stand before God." Let us then seize the moments as they fly, and redeem our time. Let us drink into the spirit of Moses, and learn of him how to live, and how to die.

We see here a man living cheerfully, living usefully to the last. Two different and indeed opposite feelings are apt to betray men into the same practical error, that of misspending their time, and neglecting their opportunities—the confidence of living long on the one hand—the near prospect of death on the other. What we imagine it is in our power to do when we please, we are in great danger of never doing at all; and we may feel the remorse of occasion for ever lost, ere we are well awake from the dream of a season continually at our disposal; and it is but too common, when thus overtaken, disconcerted and confused, to give up our work in despair. Having much to do, and the time being short, we sit down, and lament our folly, and do nothing. Presumption betrays us to-day, diffidence and despondency destroy us to-morrow.

But in the last weeks of Moses' life we discover nothing of the indecent hurry of a man conscious of neglect, and eager to repair it. He neither runs nor loiters; but he walks with the steadiness and dignity of one whose strength is as his day; who has a labour prescribed, and ability to perform it. In his youth we have a patern of generosity, and public spirit, and courage, and greatness of mind; in his manhood, of wisdom, of dilligence, of perseverance, of fidelity; and

now in his old age, of calmness, of devotion, of superiority to the world, of heavenly mindedness.

Observe the excellency of his spirit, at this period, a little more particularly. He set a proper value upon life. He desired its continuance, with the feelings natural to a man, he prized it as the gift of God, as the precious season of acting for God, of observing and improving the ways of his providence, of doing good to men, of preparation for eternity. He prayed for its prolongation, without fearing its end; and he thereby reprove that rashness which exposes life to unnecessary danger, that intemperance which wastes and shortens, that indolence and listlessness which dissipate it, and that vice and impiety which clothe death with terror.

In Moses we have a bright example of genuine patriotism. That most respectable quality appeared in him early, and shone most conspicuously at the last. "When he was come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;" Heb. xi. 24, 25. For Israel's sake he was willing to encounter a thousand dangers, to endure a thousand hardships. For them he braved the wrath of a king, sacrificed his ease, consented to be blotted out of God's book. For them he laboured, fasted, prayed; in their service was his life spent, and his dying breath was poured out in pronouncing blessings upon them. If it went well with Israel, no matter what became of himself. Their unkindness and ingratitude excited no resentment in his breast. When they rebelled he was grieved, when they were threatened he trembled, when they suffered he bled, when they were healed he rejoiced. O how his temper and conduct reprove that pride, which perpetually aims at aggrandizing itself, which must have every thing bend and yield to it, which is ready to sacrifice thousands to its own humour or advantage; that

selfishness which grasps all, sets every thing to sale, and refuses to be ashamed.

The generosity and disinterestedness of Moses eminently adorned the close of his life. He was a father, and had all the feelings of that tender relation. It was natural for him to wish and expect that his sons should be distinguished after his death, should be the heirs of his honour, should succeed to his authority. An ordinary man would have been disposed to employ the power which he possessed to build up, to enrich, to ennoble his own family: but the will of God was declared. Joshua was the choice of Heaven; Joshua his servant, one of another family, another tribe. In the appointment Moses rejoices, he adopts Joshua as his son, as his associate; sees him rise with complacency, puts his honour upon him: and thereby exposes to shame that littleness of soul which enviously represses rising merit, that vice of age which can discern nothing wise and good in the young; that tenaciousness of power which would communicate no advantage with another.

What anxiety does the good man discover that Israel should act wisely, and go on prosperously after his death! There is no end to his admonitions and instructions. By word, by writing, by insinuation, by authority, in the spirit of meekness, of love, of parental care, he cautions, he warns, he remonstrates. Men naturally love to be missed, to be inquired after, to be longed for; but it was the delight of Moses in his departing moments, that his place was already supplied, that the congregation would not miss their leader, that Joshua should happily accomplish what he had happily begun. Selfish men enjoy the prospect of the disorder and mischief which their departure may occasion. Moses foresaw the revolt of Israel after his decease, and it was the grief and bitterness of his heart.

In Moses we have an instructive instance of that continuance in well-doing, that perseverance unto the

end, which finds a duty for every day, for every hour; which accounts nothing done so long as any thing remains to be done, which cheerfully spends and is spent for the service of God, and the good of mankind. Age is ready to put in its claim, when honour is expected, and advantage to be reaped; and is as ready to plead its exemption when service is required, danger is to be encountered, and hardship undergone. But while Moses discovers the utmost readiness to share with another the emolument and the respect of his office, the trouble and fatigue of it he with equal cheerfulness undertakes and supports to the very last.

In the whole of his temper and conduct, we have an ensample which at once admonishes, reproves and encourages us. May we not, after considering the noble and excellent spirit he discovered through the course and at the close of life, contemplate the probable state of his mind in reviewing the past, and surveying the prospect before him: both affording unspeakable comfort, but neither wholly exempted from pain.

Pleasant it must have been to reflect, 1. On his miraculous preservation in infancy. “To what dangers was I then exposed? Doomed to perish by the sword from my mother’s womb. Concealed by fond parents for three months at the peril of their life, as well as my own. Committed at length to the merciless stream, a prey to manifold death—the roaring tide, hunger, the monsters of the river, contending which should destroy me. But I was precious in the sight of God. No plague came nigh me; no evil befel me. The daughter of the tyrant saved me from the rage of the tyrant. The house of Pharaoh became my sanctuary. The munificence of a princess recompensed the offices of maternal tenderness. I knew not then to whom I was indebted for protection, from what source my comforts flowed: let age and consciousness acknowledge with wonder and gratitude the benefits conferred on infant helplessness and infirmity; let my dying breath utter

praise to him who preserved me from perishing as soon as I began to breathe.”

2. May we not suppose the holy man of God, by an easy transition, passing on to meditate on deliverance from still greater danger, danger that threatened his moral life—the snares of a court? “ Flattered and caressed as *the son of Pharaoh’s daughter*, brought up in *all the learning of the Egyptians*, having all the *treasures in Egypt* at my command, at an age when the passions, *which war against the soul*, are all afloat—what risk did I run of forgetting myself, of forgetting my people, of forgetting my God? But the grace of the Most High prevented me. I *endured as seeing him who is invisible*. I *refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter*. I was not ashamed to be known for a son of Israel. I *went out to see the burdens* of my brethren, I had compassion on them, and comforted them; *not fearing the wrath of a king*, I *smote him that did the wrong*, and saved the oppressed. I *chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*. I *esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt*. To God I committed myself; and my virtue, my religion, my honour, my inward peace were preserved.”

3. What satisfaction must it have yielded Moses in reviewing his life, to reflect on his having been made the honoured instrument, in the hand of Providence, for effecting the deliverance of an oppressed people? “ I found Israel labouring, groaning, expiring in the furnace. I *beheld the tears of them that were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, but they had no comforter*. Their cry reached heaven. He who made them had mercy upon them. He was pleased to choose me out of all the myriads of Israel, to bring them *out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*. He taught my stammering tongue to speak plainly. He said to

my *fearful heart*, *Be strong*. He armed me with his potent rod; and subjected the powers of nature to my command. The oppressor was crushed in his turn, and the oppressed went out free, full and triumphant. And to me, even unto me, it was given to conduct this great, difficult, dangerous, glorious enterprise; and Heaven crowned it with success."

4. How pleasing to reflect that the Spirit of God had employed him to communicate so much valuable knowledge to mankind! "To me was this grace given, to trace nature up to its source; to ascend from son to father, up to the general parent of the human race; to rescue from oblivion the ages beyond the flood, and to rescue departed worth from the darkness of the grave. By me these venerable men, though dead, speak and instruct the world. By me the being and perfections, the works and ways, the laws and designs of the great Supreme stand unfolded; the plan and progress of his providence, the system of nature, the dispensation of grace. To my writings shall ages and generations resort for the knowledge of events past, and for the promises and predictions of greater events yet to come. *The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue, and the word of the LORD endureth for ever.*"

5. What delight must it have afforded, in reviewing the past, to revive the memory of communion with God, of exalted intercourse with the Father of spirits! "Blessed retirement from the noise of the world and the strife of tongues; solitude infinitely more delicious than all society! Wilderness of Horeb, school of wisdom, scene of calm and unmixed joy, in thee I learned to commune with my own heart, forgot the sensual, unsatisfying delights of Egypt, observed the glories of nature, contemplated the wonders of Providence, enjoyed the visions of the Almighty! Happy days, when I tended the flocks of Jethro, obeyed the dictates of inspiration, and conversed with my heavenly Father,

as a man with his friend! I saw him in flaming yet unconsuming fire, I heard his voice from the midst of the burning bush, my feet stood upon holy ground. And thou, sacred summit of Sinai, where the Most High imparted to me the counsels of his will; supernaturally sustained the feeble, mortal frame; irradiated my soul with the communications of his love, and my countenance with beams of light; how can I forget thee, and the forty hallowed days passed with thee, in converse more sublime than ever before fell to the lot of humanity! To thee, sacred structure, reared according to the pattern showed me in the mount, to thee I look in rapturous recollection! Thou wert my refuge in the hour of danger. In thee assurances of divine favour and support, compensated, extinguished the unkindness of man. How often hast thou been to me a heaven upon earth!"

—But a retrospective view of life must have presented to Moses many objects painful and humiliating; and bitter recollections must have mingled themselves with the sweet. The repeated defections of a stiff-necked and gainsaying people, whom no kindness could melt, no threatenings deter, no promise animate, no calamity subdue: a people who had requited the care of Heaven with reiterated, unprovoked rebellions; and his own labours of love, with hatred, insult and ingratitude. Painful it must have been to think, that he had survived a whole people, endeared to him by every strong, by every tender tie: that he had been gradually dying for forty years together, in a condemned, devoted race, which melted away before his eyes in the wilderness: that with his own hand he had stripped Aaron his brother of his pontifical garments, and closed his eyes. Painful to reflect on his own errors and imperfections—his criminal neglect of God's covenant, which had nearly cost him his life; his sinful delay and reluctance to accept the divine commission appointing him the deliverer of Israel; the hastiness of his spirit in defacing the

work of God, by dashing the tables of the law to the ground, and breaking them in pieces; the impatience of his temper, the unadvisedness of his lips, the unguardedness of his conduct, at the waters of strife, which drew down displeasure on his head, and irreversibly doomed it to death. This uneasy retrospect would naturally lead to prospects as uneasy and distressing.—*The time of his departure is at hand; the body must speedily be dissolved, and the dust return to the earth as it was.* Against his admission Canaan is fenced as with a wall of fire, and a distant glimpse must supply the room of possession, and another must finish his work. Besides the natural horror of death, there was mingled in that bitter cup a particular sense of personal offence and fatherly displeasure as inflicting it. Israel too, he foresaw, would after his decease revolt more and more, and call down the judgments of Heaven, and forfeit the promised inheritance—and this was to him the bitterness of death.

But by what brighter prospects was this gloom relieved, and the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death illuminated! He saw the promise of God hastening to its accomplishment. The “land flowing with milk and honey” was fully in view. The time, the set time was now come; and what powers of nature could prevent the purpose of Heaven from taking effect? “O Lord, thou art faithful and true; *Do now as thou hast said. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.* My master is dismissing me from painful service; I shall rest from my labours; I shall receive the crown. I am passing from the imperfect, interrupted communion of an earthly sanctuary, to the pure, exalted, uninterrupted, everlasting communications of the heavenly state. I shall see God as he is. *I shall be changed into the same image. I shall be ever with the Lord,*

I shall shine in his likeness. I shall be added, united to the assembly of the faithful; to the venerable men of whom I wrote, to Abel the first martyr to the truth, to Enoch, who *walked with God*, to Noah, the *preacher of righteousness*, to Abraham, who *believed*, and *was called the friend of God*, to Joseph, whose bones are now at length to rest in the land of promise, to Aaron, my brother, by nature, by affection, in offence, in hope. With the natural eye I behold the fertile plains of an earthly Canaan: but by the eye of faith I descry *another country, that is an heavenly*; watered with the *pure river of the water of life*, where grow the trees of life, whose leaves are *for the healing of the nations*: where there is *no more death*. My brethren, *I die*, but *God will surely visit you*. *There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be*. The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory. In Abraham's seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Mortality is swallowed up of life; O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory."

—"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE VII.

And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel. And he said unto them, I am an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: also the Lord hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan. The Lord thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the Lord hath said.—DEUT. xxxi. 1—3.

THE last words and the last actions of eminent men are remembered, repeated, recorded with a mournful pleasure. We listen with peculiar attention to those lips, which are to speak to us no more: and the man, and the words, which we neglected, while there was a prospect of their continuing longer with us, we prize, we cleave to, and wish to retain, when they are about to be taken away from us. Indeed we discover the value of nothing, till we are threatened with, or feel the want of it; and we awake to a sense of the happiness which we have possessed, by the bitter reflection that it is gone from us for ever.

Farewell addresses serve to rouse both the speaker and the hearers. He is led to weigh well those words which he is to have no future opportunity of altering

or amending. His eyes, his voice, his turn of thought, his expression, all will be influenced by the solemnity of his situation; and what he feels, he will certainly communicate to others. Wherefore is not every address considered in this light: as a last, farewell, dying speech? It may be so in truth; and if it were known to be so, would our attention be so distracted, our spirit so careless; would our language be thus cold, our zeal thus languid? Attend, my dear friends, and fellow mortals. This is, beyond all controversy, to some of us the last opportunity of the kind. The sound of this voice shall never again meet all those ears in one place. *It* may be for ever silenced; each of *them* may be for ever closed; and the ordinary tide of human affairs must certainly scatter, this night, persons who are never more to re-assemble, till that day when the whole human race shall be gathered together in one great multitude.

We are come hither to ponder thy dying words, O Moses, and to gird up our loins, and follow thee.

This whole book may be considered as a series of powerful, pathetic and tender addresses, delivered at different times, within the compass of the last month of his life, by Moses to Israel, in the near and certain prospect of dissolution. Art has attempted to divide it into so many several distinct heads, or branches, forming together a complete body of instruction, wonderfully adapted to the occasion, and powerfully enforced upon the minds of the hearers by the death of their teacher, which immediately followed.

The first great branch, is a succinct and animated historical detail of the conduct of the divine Providence towards them and their fathers, during the last forty years, commencing with their departure out of Horeb, and containing an account of their successive movements and encampings. A recapitulation of the recent events of their own lives, and of what had befallen their immediate predecessors, was obviously

calculated to excite emotions suitable to their present condition. A complete generation of men had melted away before their eyes under the divine displeasure! Every removal, every encampment was marked by the death of multitudes, who had fallen not by the sword of the enemy, but were cut off by the flaming sword of divine justice, and were not suffered to enter into the land promised to their fathers, "because of unbelief."

They saw in this at once the mercy and faithfulness, the justice and severity of God. Israel was still preserved, but every single offender had died the death. The covenant made with Abraham and his seed stood firm, though they were threatened with utter extermination in Egypt, and were actually exterminated in the wilderness. The possession of Canaan was made sure to that chosen race, but not one of the murmurers at Kadeshbarnea was permitted to survive the threatened destruction. By an example that came so closely home to the breast and bosom of every man, all were admonished of the absolute security, and infallible success of trusting in God, and of following the leadings of his providence; all were warned of the guilt and danger of disobedience and distrust.

We see in this the reason why so great a proportion of the sacred oracles are delivered in the form of history. A fact makes its way directly to the heart, is easily remembered, and readily applied. It requires depth of understanding and closeness of attention to comprehend a doctrine, and to draw the proper inferences from it; but "the way-faring man, though a fool," can discern the meaning, and feels the force of a plain tale of truth, and the recollection of yesterday becomes a lesson of conduct for to-day.

2dly. This valedictory address of Moses consists of a recapitulation of the laws moral, ceremonial, political and military, which he had already delivered to them in the name of God. On this account the division of the Pentateuch under consideration, has ob-

tained the name of *Mischna Thora*, translated by the Seventy, *Deuteronomy*, that is, the *second law*, or a repetition of the law. The men were dead who heard the voice of God speaking these tremendous words from Sinai. The men of the present generation were unborn, or but emerging from childhood, when that fiery dispensation was given: but its obligation was eternal and unchangeable. Providence therefore directed it to be rehearsed aloud in the ears of the generation following, by the voice of a dying man, and to be by him left recorded in lasting characters, for the instruction of every future age. What was local and temporary of this dispensation has passed away; what was immutable and universal, remains in all its force and importance; and shall continue, though heaven and earth were dissolved.

There is one law which Moses, in the prospect of death, presses with peculiar earnestness, as he knew it to be of special importance, and was but too well acquainted with the violent, the almost irresistible propensity of his auditory to infringe it—the law which prohibited and proscribed idolatry, that crime of complex enormity, against which the voice of the Eternal had uttered so many thunders, and which had brought on Israel so many grievous plagues. Nothing can be more energetical than the expressions he employs to expose the guilt and danger of this offence against God; nothing more dreadful than the judgments which he denounces against those who should contract it themselves, or presume to decoy others into that odious practice. He leaves them destitute of every thing like a pretext for following the nations in this impiety and absurdity, by calling to the recollection of those who were witnesses of the awful scene, and urging upon the consciences of those who were since born, that there was “no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire,” Deut. iv. 15, that therefore to

pretend to imitate what never was seen, what cannot be seen, was at once ridiculous folly, and daring, impious presumption. He solemnly enjoins, that the tenderest and most respectable ties of nature be disregarded in the case of those who should dare to set the example of violating the divine will in this respect; that the most intimate friends and nearest relations should become strange and hateful, if they presumed, by precept or by practice, to countenance this transgression. His own emphatic language will best express his meaning, and show with what oppressive weight the subject lay upon his heart. “If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, (which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; namely, of the gods of the people which are round about thee, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth), thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is, among you,” Deut. xiii. 6—11. And again, “If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, man or woman that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord thy God, in transgressing his covenant, and hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; and it be told thee, and thou hast

heard of it, and inquired diligently, and behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel: then shalt thou bring forth that man, or that woman (which have committed that wicked thing) unto thy gates, even that man, or that woman, and shalt stone him with stones, till they die. At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death, be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you," Deut. xvii. 2—7.

Did we not know, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked:" did we not know, by fatal experience, that there is no absurdity too gross for men to adopt, no impiety too daring for them to commit, we should be astonished to think that the enactment of such laws should ever have been necessary; that having been enacted, there should be occasion to explain and enforce them by so many awful sanctions, and that notwithstanding, in defiance of sanctions so formidable, any should have been found bold enough to transgress.

3dly. Moses labours in this, his last discourse, to establish the importance and necessity of knowing the divine law, and, for that end, of making it the subject of continual study and meditation. Every son of Israel must daily employ himself in the reading of it. The young must not plead exemption on account of his youth, nor the old plead the privilege of age. No closeness of application to secular business, no eagerness to prosecute a journey, no eminence of rank and station, no, not the state and necessary duties of royalty itself, must pretend to claim a dispensation from the superior obligations of the law of the Most High. "These words," says he, "which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach

them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates," Deut. vi. 6—9. "And it shall be," speaking of the duty and office of the king who might hereafter be chosen to reign over God's people of Israel, "when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them: that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel," Deut. xvii. 18—20.

Some of the rabbins accordingly pretend, that Moses, with his own hand, transcribed thirteen copies of the Deuteronomy, one for each of the twelve tribes, and one to be laid up till the time of electing a king should arrive, to be given him to transcribe for his private and particular use.

4thly. Moses displays, with singular skill and address, the motives suggested from their peculiar circumstances, to make the law of God the object of their veneration, and the rule of their conduct; such as, *first*—These laws all issue from the love of God as their source, and converge towards it as their centre. Their great aim and end is to engage us to love, with supreme affection, a God who is supremely amiable and excellent. "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and

to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? Behold, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day," Deut. x. 12—15.

A *second* motive to obedience is, that the observance of the laws has a native tendency to procure and to preserve both public and private felicity; to make them respectable in the eyes of the nations, and thereby to ensure their tranquility. "Behold, I have taught you," says he, "statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye shall do so, in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore, and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" Deut. iv. 5—8.

Thirdly—The laws prescribed were imposed on them by a being who had lavished miracles of mercy and goodness upon them and their fathers, and stood engaged to be a covenant God to their posterity, to the latest generations. "For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or hath God assayed to go and take

him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? Unto thee it was showed, that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God; there is none else besides him. Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he showed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire," Deut. iv. 32—36.

In a word, the laws of God are in themselves just and reasonable, plain and intelligible; accommodated to the nature and faculties of man, and carry their own wisdom and utility engraven on their forehead. "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it," Deut. xxx. 11—14.

Moses, while he thus forcibly inculcates the motives of obedience, motives inspired and pressed by every tender, by every awful consideration, finds himself under the unpleasant necessity of venting his heart in the keenest reproaches of that highly favoured but rebellious nation, for their perverseness and ingratitude; he deplores in the bitterness of his soul, the instability and transitoriness of their good motions and purposes, their fatal proneness to revolt, the inconceivable rapidity of their vibrations from virtue to vice. That exquisitely beautiful and pathetic song with which he closes his tender expostulation, and which contains a striking abridgment of this whole address, consists in

a great measure of just and severe, yet affectionate upbraidings and remonstrances upon their past conduct. "They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation. Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy Father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?" Deut. xxxii. 5, 6.

Finally, this long, this instructive, this powerful farewell sermon of the man of God, contains predictions clear, pointed and strong, of the fearful judgments which should overtake that sinful people, and involve them and their posterity in utter destruction. Many learned men, and not without the greatest appearance of reason, have supposed that the spirit of prophecy by the mouth of Moses has foretold the final dissolution of the Jewish government, and their dispersed, reproachful, despised state to this day, until the time of their restoration to the divine favour, and their re-establishment under the bond of the new and everlasting covenant, "a covenant established on better promises, ordered in all things and sure." This idea seems justified by the following and similar prophetic denunciations. "Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap

mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burned with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without, and terror within shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also, with the man of grey hairs. I said I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men," Deut. xxxii. 18—26. "Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures? To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants: when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left. And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink-offerings? Let them rise up, and help you, and be your protection. See now that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain, and of the captives from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy," Deut. xxxii. 34—42. But the time to favour revolted, returning Israel, shall come at length; and together with them the time to irradiate and deliver "the nations which were sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death;" and the prophetic soul of Moses hastens forward to conclude the sacred song, with a grand chorus of harmo-

nious voices, the voices of the ransomed of the Lord from every nation, every kindred and tribe, rejoicing together in one common salvation: "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people," Deut. xxxii. 43.

How powerfully must all this have been impressed on the hearts of his audience by the sight of their venerable instructor, bending under the weight of "an hundred and twenty years;" exhausted by labours performed in the public service, no longer capable of "going out and coming in;" excluded by the inflexible decree of Heaven from any part or lot in the land of promise; lying under the bitter sentence of impending death; his power and glory departing, and passing before his eyes to the hand of another! Why are not impressions of this sort more lasting, and more efficient? Shall "the righteous perish, and no man lay it to heart?" Is "the merciful man taken away, and will none consider?" "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come." By his departure the earth is impoverished, but heaven is enriched. Remove the veil, and behold him "entering into peace:" "they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." I hear a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them," Rev. xiv. 13.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE VIII.

And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong, and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee, he will be with thee; he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.—DEUT. xxxi. 7, 8.

IS it not a presumption and a presentiment of immortality, that men naturally feel, design and act as if they were immortal? In life we are in the midst of death; but it is equally true, that in the very jaws of death, we live; and fondly dream of living longer. Let the fatal moment come when it will, it comes to break into some scheme we hoped to execute, to interrupt some work we had begun, to disappoint some purpose we had adopted. The warnings of dissolution which are sent to others, we seem to understand and feel better than those which are addressed to ourselves. One man is under sentence of condemnation, another labours under an incurable disease; one is daily exposing his life to jeopardy in the high places of the field, another putting the knife of intemperance to his

throat every hour: this man has completed his seventieth year, and his neighbour has lived to see his children's children of the third and fourth generation.

These are all symptoms equally mortal, but none takes the alarm to himself: every one is concerned for his neighbour's case, and flatters himself his own is not quite so desperate. The wretch condemned to death, soothes his soul to rest with the hope of a pardon, and laments the certain doom of his consumptive acquaintance: the declining man, with his foot in the grave, pities and prays for the unhappy creature who must suffer on Wednesday se'nnight. The soldier braves the death that is before his eyes in a thousand dreadful forms, in the presumption of victory; and the voluptuary thanks his kinder stars that he is likely to sleep in a sound skin. The man of seventy reckons upon fourscore; and ten years in prospect are a kind of eternity; and the grandsire amuses himself with the hope of seeing his grandchildren settled in the world. Thus the pleasing illusion goes on: and men are dead, indeed, before they had any apprehension of dying.

The thoughtless and impious insensibility with which many advance to their latter end, is not more mournful and distressing, than the steadiness and composure of piety and habitual preparation are pleasing and instructive. Blessed is the state of that man to whom life is not a burden, nor death a terror, who has "a desire to depart and to be with Christ," but is willing "to continue in the flesh," for the glory of God, and the good of men; who neither quits his station and duty in life in sullen discontent, nor cleaves to the enjoyments of this world, as one who has no hope beyond the grave.

But the cup of death, to the best of men, contains many bitter ingredients. Even to Moses it was far from being unmixed. To the natural horror of dying was superadded the sense of divine displeasure; a sense of death as a particular punishment. It disap-

pointed a hope long and fondly indulged in, the hope of being himself, and of seeing Israel in possession of the promised and expected inheritance. And, what was the bitterness of death to such a spirit as his? Moses died in the persuasion, and a melancholy one it was, that the people on whom he had bestowed so much labour, whom he had cherished with such tender affection, whom he was so unremittingly anxious to conduct to wisdom, to virtue, and to happiness, would, after his death, swerve from the right path, provoke God to become their enemy, and thereby bring down certain destruction upon their own heads. "I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death? Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them. For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands," Deut. xxxi. 27—29.

It is pleasant to a dying father to entertain the sweet hope that the children of his care, of his love, will remember the lessons which he taught them, will follow out his views, will support the credit of his name, will instruct and bless the world by the example of their wisdom, their piety, their virtues, though he is not to be the happy spectator of it: but ah! more cruel than the pangs of dissolving nature, the dreadful conviction of approaching folly and disorder: the sad prospect of discord among brethren; of profligacy and licentiousness, no longer restrained by parental gravity and authority: a fair inheritance, and an honourable name ready to be dissipated by profusion, to be covered with shame, to be disfigured by vice, to be forfeited by

treason. It is sweet to a dying pastor to contemplate the success of his ministry, the extent of his usefulness; to cheer his fainting heart with the thought of having been made the humble instrument of bringing many souls unto God, many sons unto glory: and with the well-grounded belief that his doctrine shall survive him: that though dead he shall continue to speak and to instruct. Sweet the prospect of that day, when he shall present himself, and the joyful fruit of all his labours, to his father and God, saying, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in Mount Zion," Isa. viii. 18. It was this which caused the great "Author and Finisher of our faith" himself to rejoice in spirit, on the very eve of his departure out of the world. "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled," John xvii. 12. But O how depressing to reflect, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain," Isa. xlix. 4, to look back upon a ministry, not the "savour of life unto life, but of death unto death," and to look forward to the dreadful progress of degeneracy and corruption, from evil to worse, till "sin, being finished, bringeth forth death;" to look forward to the still more dreadful day of doom, and to the prospect of appearing as an accuser and a witness against the despisers of that gospel, which would have saved their souls from death.

The faithful servants of God are not all equally successful, and even a Moses has the mortification of knowing assuredly that all his pains and anxieties should prove ineffectual. The tide of corruption sometimes rushes down so impetuously, that no force can stem it; and Providence is often pleased to put honour upon the meaner and feebler instrument, that the glory may redound, not "to him that willeth, nor to him that runneth, but to God, who showeth

mercy.” But every faithful minister, like Moses, has at least this consolation; “having kept nothing back, but declared the whole counsel of God, they have delivered their own souls;” they published the truth of God, “whether men would hear or whether they would forbear;” and if they have not been so happy as to persuade, they have at least put to silence wicked and unreasonable men; if they have not prevailed to render them holy, they have at least rendered them inexcusable; if they have been unable to subdue the pride of the creature, they have displayed the holiness and justice of the Creator.

We find Moses taking refuge in this, when the dearer, sweeter hope was at an end—the hope of being the favoured, honoured minister of life and salvation. “I am fast approaching to the end of my career; I have already passed the limits which God has prescribed to the life of man. Six score of years are fled away and gone, and these hairs, whitened by time, labour and affliction, feelingly inform me that my last moment is at hand, that no more time remains but what is barely sufficient to give you a few parting admonitions, to breathe over you the blessing of a dying friend, and to bid you a long farewell. After a laborious, anxious and painful ministry of more than forty years; after being honoured of God to perform before you eyes, and those of your fathers, a series of miracles, which shall be the astonishment and instruction of the whole world till time expire, I was looking for the compensation of all my troubles, the reward of all my labours, the accomplishment of all my wishes, in your sincere return to God, in your gratitude to your friend and deliverer, in your fidelity and obedience to God, and in the prosperity and happiness which must infallibly have flowed from them. The paternal solicitude I have felt, that ardent love which emboldened me, at the hazard of my own life, “to stand in the breach” “between you and a holy and jealous God, to turn away his

wrath, lest he should destroy you;" that fervor of zeal which hurried me on to wish myself blotted out of God's book, if the dearer name of Israel might be permitted to continue written in it; all my discourses, all my emotions, all my efforts; my active days, my sleepless nights; these unceasing sighs which I still breathe to Heaven in your behalf, these last tears which a dying old man sheds over a people still and ever dear to him, and from whom to be torn asunder is the death of deaths; these are the faithful and undoubted proofs of my affection for you, of my unabated, extinguishable zeal for your salvation. But, alas, however earnestly I may desire it, I dare not, cannot hope! I foresee your perfidiousness and rebellion; I know you perverseness and ingratitude. "While I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death?" Deut. xxxi. 27. What then is left me, but the mingled and strongly allayed satisfaction of reflecting that I am innocent of your blood, that your salvation is in your own hands, that if you perish, your blood must be upon your own heads. "Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them," Deut. xxxi. 28. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live," Chap. xxx. 19.

Having in terms such as these poured out the anguish of an overflowing heart, Moses addresses himself to his last earthly employment. The last exercise of his authority is to lay down all authority. The concluding act of his administration, is to transfer the right of administration to another; and the legislator, leader and commander expires; while the man yet lives. Imagination can hardly paint a more affecting scene. Hear the trumpet sounding the proclamation of a solemn

assembly, an holy convocation. Behold the thousands of Israel flocking together to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; every eye straining to catch a departing glance of him whom they were to behold no more; every ear eagerly attentive to drink in the last accents of that voice which the hand of death was about to silence for ever. Behold the venerable sage, in all the composure of unaffected piety, in all the dignity of wisdom, in all the respectability of age, in all the simplicity of a child, in all the serenity of a celestial spirit, in all the solemnity of death, advancing to his well-known station, presenting to the people him whom they were henceforward to acknowledge and obey as the ruler appointed over them by Heaven. His eyes beam complacency, his tongue drops manna, as he conveys to his noble successor the plenitude of his power, the residue of his honour, a double portion of his spirit. Behold he lifts up his hands and lays them upon the head of Joshua, with a thousand tender wishes that his burden might sit light upon him, that he might escape the pains he himself had endured, and attain the felicity which was denied to him: with a thousand paternal exhortations to follow Providence, and fear nothing: to love Israel, to seek their good always: with a thousand fervent prayers for his prosperity and success. I see Joshua with modest reluctance shrinking back from a charge so weighty: desirous of being still a subject and a servant: accepting with regret honours of which Moses must be stripped; ready to cry out, as his master was taken away from him, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" 2 Kings ii. 12. I see on every countenance a mixture of sorrow and resignation, of hope clouded with remorse and concern; they could now die for him, whose life they had embittered by unkindness, levity and ingratitude; they reproach themselves and one another, as having occasioned the death of the wisest and best of men; they cannot bear to think of

surviving him. But a voice more awful than that of man is heard; a glory more than human appears. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation. And the Lord appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle," Deut. xxxi. 14, 15. What solemn moments to the whole congregation, those which Moses and Joshua passed before the Lord, remote from the public eye! How solemn to the parties themselves! What is a charge from the mouth of a dying man, though that man be a Moses, compared to a charge from the mouth of Jehovah himself, by whom spirits are weighed, and to whom all the dread importance of eternity stands continually revealed? And this God, O my friends, is daily sounding a charge in every ear, "Occupy till I come." "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest." "Be sober, be vigilant, for your adversary the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." "See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

This secret conference being ended, they return to the people, and Moses publicly delivers to the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, a copy of the law which he had transcribed with his own hand, to be laid up in the side of the ark, as a standing witness for God against a sinful people; and the business of this interesting and eventful day concludes with a public recital from the lips of Moses of that tender and pathetic song, which we have in the thirty-second chapter. This sacred song every Israelite was to commit to memory, to repeat frequently, and to teach it

every man to his son. It was composed expressly by the command of God, and under his immediate inspiration. "Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel. And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song until they were ended," Deut. xxxi. 19, 22, 30.

And a most wonderful composition it is, whether considered as the production of a lively, lofty, correct imagination; abounding with the boldest images, and conveying the noblest sentiments; adding all the graces of poetry to all the force of truth; as conveying the most useful and necessary moral and religious instruction, in a channel the most pleasing and attractive; as the address of a dying man, a dying father, a dying minister, to his friends, to his family, to his flock; abounding with the tenderest touches of nature, flowing immediately from the heart, and rushing with impetuous force to the lips; as the awful witness of the great God against a disobedient and gainsaying race; exhibiting to this hour the proof of the authenticity of that record where it stands, of the truth and faithfulness, of the mercy and severity of the dread Jehovah, and of the certainty of the things wherein, as Christians, we have been instructed.

What can equal the boldness and sublimity of his exordium or introduction? How is the boasted eloquence of Greece and Rome left at an infinite distance behind! What a coldness in the address of Demosthenes and Cicero, compared to the fervour and elevation of the Israelitish orator! "Ye men of Athens." "Romans." "Conscript Fathers." If ever there was an audience that demanded respect, from numbers, from importance, from situation; if ever there was a speaker prompted by duty, drawn by inclination, urged

on by the spur of the occasion, Israel was that audience, Moses that speaker, on this ever-memorable day. But the ardent soul of this heaven-taught orator, with thousands upon thousands before his eyes, grasps, with a noble enthusiasm, an infinitely larger space than the plains of Moab, an audience infinitely more august than the thousands of Israel. "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth." This was seizing the attention at once; the solid globe, thus summoned, seems to give ear, the celestial spheres stand still to listen, angels hover on the wing to mark and record the last words of the departing prophet; what mortal ear then can be inattentive, what spirit careless? How sweetly calculated is the next sentence to compose the minds of his hearers, roused and alarmed by the solemnity of his first address. The thunder of heaven seemed ready to burst upon their heads, after an invocation so awful, and though Moses alone spake, they were ready to die; but their fears are gently lulled to rest, the next word he utters; he has only love in his heart, and honey upon his tongue. "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass," Deut. xxxii. 2. The final object of Moses being to warn, to admonish, and to reprove the perverse nation of whom he was taking leave, observe how skilfully he manages this difficult and delicate part of his task. To have come directly and without preparation to it, had been to give certain disgust and offence; for he had to deal with a moody, murmuring, irritable, discontented race; he therefore first fills their minds with great images, leads them to the contemplation of one object surpassingly grand; impresses it in various points of view upon their hearts and consciences, till having lost themselves in its grandeur and immensity, they are prepared to bear, to approve, and to profit by the severe personal attack that follows. "Be-

cause I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he," Deut. xxxii. 3, 4.

Having thus raised them above every mean, every selfish consideration; and placed them, and made them to feel themselves in the awful presence of the great God, "who is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works," he descends abruptly, by a transition quick as lightning, to the censure he had in view. But even then, he insinuates it, rather than charges it home; and speaks for some time as of strangers, as of persons absent; and constitutes his auditors judges as it were of the case of others, not their own; and by employing the address of the third person, *they* and *their*, leaves them for a moment in uncertainty whom he could mean; and when he comes at length to address them in the second person, and to use the terms *thee* and *thy*, how delicately is the application qualified, by the introduction of every tender, every melting, every conciliating circumstance! "*They* have corrupted themselves, *their* spot is not the spot of his children: *they* are a perverse and crooked generation. Do *ye* thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he *thy* Father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?" Deut. xxxii. 5, 6.

He then goes into a recapitulation, partly historical, partly poetic, partly allegorical, at once to refresh the memory, to fire the imagination, and to exercise the invention, of the divine conduct towards them and their fathers, during many generations, that the conclusion he was about to draw might fall with irresistible weight upon the minds of all; that their base ingratitude and desperate folly might appear to themselves in a more odious light, when contrasted with the wisdom, goodness and loving-kindness of the Lord. This occupies a considerable part of the chapter, from the

seventh verse to the eighteenth, and a passage it is of exquisite force and beauty, as I am convinced you will also think upon a careful perusal of it.

Constrained at last to denounce the righteous judgment of God, in order to approve his own fidelity, and if possible to prevent the ruin which he feared, he makes a display of the awful terrors of divine justice, sufficient to awaken the dead, and to confound the living; and to increase its force and vehemence, Moses disappears, and God, the great God himself, comes forward, and in the first person utters the seven thunders of his wrath; “For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also, with the man of grey hairs,” Deut. xxxii. 22, 25.

The prophet as it were exhausted with this violent exertion, this formidable denunciation of vengeance, sinks into feeble, hopeless regret, and he reluctantly, despairingly deplores that misery which he can neither prevent nor avert. “They are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up?” Deut. xxxii. 28, 29, 30.

Finally, a dawn of hope arises, and, wrapt into future times, the sacred bard hails the coming day of deliverance, and exults in the prospect of the junction of the nations with the ancient people of God, in the participation of one and the same great salvation. “Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land and to his people,” Deut. xxxii. 43.

Such is the structure, such the general outline of this inimitable piece of sacred poesy. If what has been said shall induce any one to study it more attentively, he will probably discover beauties which have escaped us; and the discovery will bring its own reward. How many fathers, as they afterwards rehearsed the words of this song in the ears of their children, and taught them the knowledge of it, would recollect with a mournful pleasure, that they saw and heard Moses himself recite it aloud, on the very last day of his life; and glory in relating how near him they stood, and in describing to a new generation the form of his countenance, the deportment of his person, the tones of his voice!

That very day, the warrant of death arrives. The ministry of even a Moses is accomplished, and Providence hastens to convince the world, that, depart who will, the work of Heaven never can stand still. We have seen him hitherto engaged in active labours for Israel and for God. We shall consider him yet once more, dismissed from his service, and concluding a life of eminent usefulness, by a death of charity, benediction, prescience and resignation. May God impress on our minds a sense of our frailty, mortality and accountableness, that we may redeem the time, fulfil the duties of our day and the design of our Creator, work out our salvation, and so die in peace, die in hope, whenever it shall please Him to call us away to the world of spirits. Amen.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE IX.

And this is the blessing wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death—
DEUT. xxxiii. 1.

SENECA, the celebrated Roman moralist, was preceptor to the Emperor Nero, and had early and studiously trained him to virtue. But falling under the displeasure of that sanguinary tyrant, he was condemned to loose his life, by being blooded to death. The day of execution being arrived, he prepared to meet his fate with intrepidity, and to die as he had lived, in communicating useful knowledge. His pupils gathered round him, eager to mark his dying deportment, and provided with their writing tables, to record and preserve his last sayings. He was put into the warm bath, the arteries of his legs and arms were opened, and the purple fluid which sustains life, gradually drained off, while his sorrowing, admiring disciples caught the words as they fell from his parched lips.

But a greater than Seneca is here. We are this night gathered round a dying Moses, to listen to the last accents of that tongue which, one excepted, spake as never man spake. We behold him neither impetuously rushing forwards into the mortal conflict, nor timidly shrinking from it; but advancing with a steady,

majestic step, to meet the king of terrors. The interests of the God of Israel, and of the Israel of God, had employed his thoughts all his life long; and, blended in one, they glow in and expand his heart to his latest moment. He was speedily to cease from every earthly care, to cease from serving Israel any longer, to be occupied with God only; but even in death he is contriving the means of doing good to that dearly beloved, that fondly cherished people. As if his heart had relented at the harshness of some of the expressions which fidelity and a sense of duty had extorted from him; like one unwilling to part with them under any semblance of unkindness or displeasure, he again assumes the tender father, tunes his tongue to the law of kindness, buries all resentment of the past, and every thing unpleasant, in the prospects of futurity, in the gentleness and benevolence of friends who were separating to meet no more.

The soul that is at peace with God desires to be at peace with all men; and it is meet that dying breath be sweetened with mercy, forgiveness and love. Slowly and solemnly as Moses advanced to meet his latter end, would we accompany his steps in his last progress through the beloved tents of Israel, and in his ascent to the hill, from whence he never should return. With a heart like his, overflowing with charity to the whole church of God, and filled with sentiments of peculiar affection towards you, we behold the approach of that hour which is to disperse us, perhaps too for ever. With a blessing on our lips, like him, and O that his God and ours may make it effectual, we are hastening to bid you farewell.

The words which I have read are the beginning of the 54th and last *parasha*, or great section of the law, into which the whole books of Moses were subdivided, for the conveniency of publicly reading them, in conjunction with the prophets, every sabbath-day; a custom which prevailed in the Jewish church, down to the

times of our Saviour and his apostles, as we learn from several passages of the gospel history. Thus Christ himself, when "he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, as his custom was, went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears," Luke iv. 16—21. Thus James, in determining the question in the synod of Jerusalem, concerning the necessity of circumcision, says, "Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath-day," Acts xv. 21. And Paul and Barnabas, when "they came to Antioch, in Pisidia, went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on," Acts xiii. 14, 15.

The first section begins with the opening of the book of Genesis, and goes up to the ninth verse of the sixth chapter, and is called *Bereshit*, the first word in the Hebrew bible. The second begins at these words in the sixth chapter, "These are the generations of Noah:" and is thence called *Noah*, and ends at the beginning of chapter twelfth, which sets out with the call of Abraham, and is therefore styled the section

Lec Leca, i. e. “Get thee out,” and so of the rest. To bring the whole fifty-four divisions within the compass of the year, they joined two of the shortest into one reading. Thus the whole constitution, both as to civil and sacred things, was publicly rehearsed once every year; so that it was impossible for any decent Israelite to be grossly ignorant of either the laws, the history, or the religion of his country.

The first public lecture was on the sabbath that followed the feast of tabernacles, and went on till the anniversary of that feast returned. I have mentioned these circumstances for several reasons. I am not ill pleased to have so respectable an example for attempting a mode of instruction, which reason and experience convince us to be at once the most pleasant and the most useful. I honour human learning, I admire great talents, I am enchanted with eloquence; but I am persuaded, if *saving* knowledge be communicated, it is by the quick and powerful energy of God’s word coming, not with the allurements of man’s wisdom, “but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power.” This leads us to express a wonder why the reading of the scriptures by large portions at a time is not universally practised in christian congregations. Surely there must be a better reason for neglecting it, than that it is enjoined by the canons of the church, and is in general practice in the establishment. The last reason I have at present to render for this digression, if it be thought one, is its affording me an opportunity of earnestly recommending to masters and mistresses of families, the regular and progressive use of the scriptures, within the precincts of their private households, for the instruction of their children and servants. I am well aware that from a diffidence and humility not too severely to be blamed, some younger heads of families are tempted to neglect family worship altogether, because some parts of it they cannot, dare not, undertake: that for example, of addressing God in prayer, as the mouth of their domestic little church. Let

them begin with reading aloud the word of God: for this surely they have courage sufficient. They will be brought to pray insensibly, they will soon cease to be ashamed of that which is their highest honour and most glorious privilege. We now return.

The idea I have formed to myself of this "blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death," Deut. xxxiii. 1, how justly I presume not to say, is this: Moses, having received his final summons to prepare for death, feels himself prompted at once by affection and the spirit of prophecy, to take a particular leave of every tribe, to bestow a several benediction on every one by name, and to prepare them one by one for the conquest of their inheritance, by giving them prophetically a general notion of their future condition, as constituent parts of the commonwealth of Israel, and of the particular lot to be assigned to each, with its corresponding advantages and pursuits. For this purpose I suppose him making a solemn progress through the whole host, going from tribe to tribe, from tent to tent, and pouring out his soul, as a dying parent, in blessings upon his offspring, according to their different characters and conditions. O how unlike these visits of selfishness, pride, ambition and strife, which the candidates for fame, place and power, are from time to time making through a corrupted land! Let us attend his progress, and mark what he says.

We find Moses still beginning, proceeding, concluding with God. He set out on this last awful circuit, with a mind full of the glorious majesty of the great Jehovah. He calls to his own remembrance, and impresses the image of it on the souls of the whole people, that great and dreadful day when "the Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them," Deut. xxxiii. 2. The

particular mention of Seir and Paran in this exordium, has given birth to a poor conceit in the Jerusalem Targum, to this purpose, "that God first offered his law, and the protection which it afforded, to the Idumeans, the inhabitants of mount Seir, and the posterity of Esau, but that they rejected it, because it contained this precept, "Thou shalt not kill." That afterwards it was tendered to the Ishmaelites, or inhabitants of mount Paran, who rejected it, because it said, "Thou shalt not steal." That then it was proposed to the posterity of Jacob, who immediately replied, "All that the Lord hath commanded will we do, and be obedient." Without having recourse to a construction so unsupported, forced and unnatural, the words of Moses, at the first glance, convey to us an image inconceivably grand and sublime, but at the same time simple, natural and obvious. Israel was encamped in the plains of Moab, with Jordan and the fertile fields of Canaan directly in view: the prospect on the south terminated by the lofty mountains of Teman or Seir; and on the north by mount Paran, while Sinai raised its awful head, and buried it in the clouds of heaven from behind. Moses accordingly represents, in the bold imagery of oriental poetry, the glory of the Lord arising like the sun in the east, from behind the top of Sinai, and instantly darting his light from hill to hill, and increasing in lustre till the whole expanse of heaven is filled with it. The prophet Habakkuk has evidently caught the same celestial fire, is filled with the same animating object, when he exclaims, "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand; and there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.

He stood and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations, and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting," Habak. iii. 3—6.

But what are mountains and hills, and their inhabitants? Moses represents the great God as arising in unclouded majesty amidst ten thousand of his holy ones. "Angels, his ministers, that excel in strength," the least of whom "could wield these elements." His red right hand is extended, presenting to the astonished beholder a law, a fiery law, a fire that purifies, a fire that consumes. But the terror of this dreadful appearance is instantly lost, in a display of the grace and mercy which prompted this splendid visit. "Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words," Deut. xxxiii. 3. Here we behold the legislator lost in the friend, and, instead of distractedly, despairingly calling upon "the mountains to fall upon us, and the hills to cover us," we sit down in tranquility at the feet of our gracious teacher, and every one for himself listens to the language of love.

Moses first approaches the tents of the tribe of Reuben, and having introduced himself by these solemn, striking words, he proceeds to his particular salutation of that tribe. "Let Reuben live, and not die; and let not his men be few," Deut. xxxiii. 6. Concerning the head of that tribe, his dying father had prophetically denounced, "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel;" but the blessing of Moses seems to wipe the blot out of the scutcheon, and Reuben seems restored to his rank in Israel again. Reuben alone of the sons of Jacob pitied Joseph in his distress, and contrived the means of restoring him to his father again. This redeems him and his family from infamy and destruction, and we are disposed to drown the memory of his lewdness, in respect for his tenderness and humanity.

Who stands next on the roll of Jacob's sons? To

whom is the second salutation due? Simeon. But ah! we see the curse of a dying father upon him; we see Moses passing by his door without bidding him God speed; we see the blood of the Shechemites, the innocent, credulous Shechemites, laying with an oppressive weight upon his seed; we see a tribe of fifty-nine thousand three hundred in the wilderness of Sinai, melted down and reduced to twenty-two thousand two hundred in the plains of Moab; we see no judge or magistrate in future times springing from his loins; we see him "divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel," and in all this we see the vengeance of a righteous God pursuing a cool and deliberate murderer to utter ruin, and we think of the more dreadful weight of that blood which a hard-hearted race imprecated upon themselves and their children; and which the shame and sufferings of one thousand eight hundred years have not yet expiated. What must the sons of Simeon have felt when their dying leader passed them by, without vouchsafing them a word; to find themselves alone unblessed of all the children of their father's house! Speak to me, O merciful Father, in whatever language thou wilt: chide, upbraid, chastise me; but O pass me not by in silent neglect; cease not to reprove me: say not, "Let him alone."

The dying prophet passes next to the standard of the tribe of Judah. Judah, destined to empire, increase and strength, Judah the father of many princes. The root and offspring of David. "And this is the blessing of Judah: and he said, Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah; and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him, and be thou an help to him from his enemies," Deut. xxxiii. 7. These words of Moses sends us again to the dying bed of Jacob, and we find both patriarchs holding the same idea concerning the prerogative tribe, strength invincible, triumph over every foe, supreme authority; and we find ourselves led still farther back, to Leah, his mother, in

child-birth, bestowing on this her fourth son a name expressive of her personal exultation and triumph; "Judah, praise the Lord," and thence to the infinitely glorious design of Providence, which has swallowed up the transient, private feeling of the individual, in the great and comprehensive view of general compassion and favour, and the source of universal gratitude and praise; and, borne on the wings of inspiration, we rise with the beloved disciple in vision, to contemplate the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, prevailing to open the sealed book, in the right hand of him that sits on the throne, and loosing the seven seals thereof. "And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb, as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth," Rev. v. 6—10.

Thus we behold all that is great and magnificent among men, bringing its glory and honour and laying it at the feet of Jesus; and all that is past and present lost in the immensity and importance of that which is to come.

He now approaches the priestly tribe of Levi, his kinsmen and friends according to the flesh, and copiously bestows his valedictory benediction upon them, in these remarkable words, "Let thy Thummim and

thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law; they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar. Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again," Deut. xxxiii. 8—11.

Levi had been a partaker with Simeon, in shedding the blood of the Shechemites, and had fallen under the same condemnation; but their spirit and zeal in expiating the guilt of the golden calf by the blood of its idolatrous worshippers, has removed the stain, and restored their own blood again, and the dreadful sentence, "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel," as far as it affects them, is from a curse turned into a blessing. They are divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel, but it is honourably to themselves and usefully to others: as the priests of the Lord, and the instructors of the people. Why may we not suppose Eleazar the high-priest, arrayed in his sacerdotal vestments, standing at the head of his tribe to receive the salutation of Moses, and that the appearance of this sacred officer in the splendour of his pontifical garb, might suggest to Moses some of the particulars contained in this blessing, especially the beginning of it? "Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one." "Thy Thummim and thy Urim," that is being interpreted, "thy perfections and thy lights." They were mysteries, of which we have spoken in a former Lecture, put into the high-priest's breast-plate, and were designed apparently to signify the graces and office of the priesthood, which was com-

mitted to Aaron and his seed, till Christ came, who should obtain and exercise an everlasting and unchangeable priesthood, after a more excellent order than that of Aaron.

According to the different ideas of the mystery of the Urim and Thummim, and the connexion here established between them and the temptation at Massah and the strife at Meribah, various turns and interpretations have been given to the words of Moses.

1. They are supposed to be addressed to God himself, and the sense to run thus, “Thy Thummim and thy Urim” (O God) be with the man, thy gracious saint, (Aaron and his seed) whom thou temptedst with temptation, or contendedst with (for his sin) at the waters of Meribah, of which we have the history, Numb. xx. “And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel; therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and he was sanctified in them,” Numb. xx. 12, 13.

Or, 2dly, they may be addressed to the whole tribe, and with this sense, Thy Thummim and thy Urim (O Levi) be with Aaron and his sons! the holy, chosen, anointed one of thy gracious God, whom thou, in common with the rest of Israel, temptedst in Massah and in the strife at Meribah.

Or, 3dly, understanding by the “holy one,” the Christ of God, this will be the sense, Thy Thummim and thy Urim (O Levi) is with (or belongs to) the man thy Holy One, (Messiah, the Christ) the Holy One of God, whom thou temptedst at Massah, and didst strive with at Meribah. In this last interpretation, the weakness, insufficiency, imperfection and transitoriness of the Levitical priesthood are implied: it retained not long the Urim and Thummim, but lost them in the Babylonish captivity, as we find from

Ezra, chap. ii. ver. 63, "And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim." And it does not appear they ever had them more, until by Jesus Christ, our High-Priest after the order of Aaron, they were restored in the "light and truth" of the gospel.

The blessing upon Levi thus proceeds; "Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant," Deut. xxxiii. 9. This is generally understood to express the devotedness of that tribe to the worship and service of God, which laid them under a necessity of abstractedness from the world, and constrained them, when employed in the order of their course, to suppress all appearance of secular concern, such as mourning for the dead, and the like. Thus when "Nadab and Abihu perished by fire before the Lord," Aaron and his two surviving sons were expressly forbid to show any signs of sorrow. "Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes, lest ye die." "And Aaron held his peace." The words are by many interpreters supposed particularly to refer to the judgment executed through the zeal of this tribe on their offending brethren in the matter of the golden calf, which is thus described: "And Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to-day to

the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day," *Exod. xxxii. 26—29.* And it may perhaps be intended as a warning to the christian priesthood, that though their profession does call them wholly to renounce the world, to restrain the workings of natural affection, and cease to be men; yet it does call them to a higher degree of heavenly-mindedness, to stricter self-government, to a greater superiority to worldly attachments and pursuits, to have no respect of persons in dispensing the bread of life, to "know no man after the flesh," to sit looser than others to the things of time.

The next article of their prophet's parting blessing describes their glorious privileges. "They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law; they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar." The priest's lips should keep knowledge.

This then is the first duty of thy office; to "teach Jacob the judgments of God, and Israel his law." Theirs was to be the distinguished honour of training up every succeeding generation as it arose, in the knowledge of the God of their fathers, in what he had done for them, and what he required of them; of pointing out and inculcating upon them the connexion between their privileges and their duties, their safety and their obedience, their security and their fidelity. They were still to set before the people "good and evil, the blessing and the curse," the promises which allured to the one, the threatenings which deterred from the other. They were under the necessity, of consequence, of studying the law of God, and the history of his providence themselves, in order to the instruction of others; and to exhibit a decent conformity, in their own deportment, to what was written, as a pattern to their fellow-citizens. A task at once painful, dangerous and honourable.

The second duty of their station was, "to put incense before God." That sacred perfume was emble-

matical of the prayers, the praises and thanksgiving of Israel; and on Levi was conferred the glorious privilege of standing between God and the people, of conveying from him to them the dictates of his will, the promises of his grace, the assurance of his favour and protection; and, as the mouth of the people, to re-convey to God, the effusions of their gratitude, the acknowledgment of their submission and dependence; their entire confidence in the truth and faithfulness of God, their entire hope in his mercy. These the sons of Levi were to present before the Lord as incense; and with this sacrifice of praise from the people, the incense of their own grateful acknowledgments would naturally mingle and ascend.

Finally, the blessing pronounced on this distinguished tribe, imposed on them the office of offering up “whole burnt sacrifice upon the altar of God.” They not only stood between a gracious God and an indebted people; but a holy and offended God, and a frail, offending people. Hence the necessity of “burnt sacrifice,” hence the idea of atonement, hence the shedding of blood for the remission of sin, hence the institution of the Levitical priesthood—“the shadow of good things to come.” And thus the daily sacrifice, the intercession of the house of Aaron, and the united characters of teacher and priest in the same person, prefigured and pointed out “the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world”—“The one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” The great Teacher sent from God, “who spake as never man spake.” “God’s beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased.”

The conclusion of the benediction is prophetic, and descriptive of their reward, their inheritance, and security. “Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again,” Deut. xxxiii. 11. This is the

perfection of creature happiness; ample provision, and the blessing of the Almighty poured down, and resting upon it—works and labours of love cheerfully performed, and graciously accepted—every foe subdued, and every ground of fear for ever removed. Here may we not apply to this tribe in particular, what Moses, in the close, applies to Israel in general? “Happy art thou, O *Levi*: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places,” Deut. xxxiii. 29.

Such were the functions, the privileges, the honours and the emoluments of the Levitical priesthood. They suggest to the christian ministry, the vigilance, diligence, fidelity and zeal which become those “who must give account”—the necessity laid upon them “to declare the whole counsel of God”—the assured support on which they may depend, while they conscientiously aim at doing their duty—the glorious “recompense of reward” which is laid up for “the good and faithful servant,” in that day when “they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever,” Dan. xii. 3. May the power of such motives be felt and understood by all who bear the sacred and important office, that by them they may be rendered “steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as they know that their labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

The farther progress of Moses through the remaining tribes of Israel shall be the subject of the next Lecture.

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE X.

And this is the blessing wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death—
DEUT. xxxiii. 1.

THE rich man in hell is represented, Luke xvi. 27, 28, as entertaining the fond belief, that the return of one from the dead would certainly be effectual, to the conviction and amendment of a thoughtless and impenitent generation. And men in general are disposed to ascribe an infallible efficacy to means fabricated in their own imagination, while, at the same time, they wilfully neglect to use those which God has appointed, whose operation is undoubted, and of which they are in the entire possession. The man of one talent lays it up in a napkin and buries it, because he cannot, with one, do the work of five or of ten. One man is an infidel, because the miraculous powers which once accompanied the preaching of the gospel, accompany it no more: another affects to despise all external evidence whatever, and looks at Christianity with a suspicious eye, because it called in miracles and prophecy to confirm and support it. The Jews rejected the counsel of God against themselves, saying, "He casteth out devils, by Beelzebub the prince of the devils," Matt. xii. 24. The Greeks accounted the doctrine of the cross foolishness, because it belied their vain philosophy, and exposed their worldly spirit.

Were it possible for the human race to assemble in one general council, in order to settle a mode of religion which should suit the whole, they would speedily be constrained to separate, without coming to any specific, decisive agreement on a point so essential; for pride, and selfishness, and the spirit of contradiction, would instantly raise opposition, and the most salutary idea would be rejected by one party, for no better reason than that it was adopted by another. Were the rich man to come from the dead, commissioned "to tell the secrets of his prison-house;" were Lazarus permitted to leave the bosom of Abraham, in order to display to men the glories of paradise; what could they say that has not been repeated a thousand and a thousand times? The one would be esteemed by a busy, careless, unbelieving world, a poor, moping, melancholy wretch, fit for a place in Bedlam; the other would be called an enthusiastic visionary; and they might, for aught the world cared, return to the places from whence they came, and report that mankind was better employed than to listen to their dreams; that it was election time; that the term was coming on, that a packet was expected, or a fleet arrived.

Men amuse themselves with crying up the advantages of those who saw Christ going about doing good, "healing all manner of sickness among the people;" of those who heard Paul preach, and the like; but the faithful and true witness assures us, that Jesus frequently wrought miracles, and Paul preached in vain. Capernaum, Bethsaida, Jerusalem, remained full of unbelievers; and apostolic eloquence was called babbling by one, it made another to shake under a temporary fit of trembling, and only "almost persuaded" a third to be a christian.

The decision of father Abraham then, in the passage already referred to, is founded in truth and experience. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead,"

Luke xvi. 31. Moses spake from the brink of the grave, and was forgotten the moment his voice ceased. God himself thundered from Sinai, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me," Exod. xx. 4, 5; and within "a little month" we see all Israel dancing round a golden calf, and saying, "These be thy Gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," Exod. xxxii. 4. The Son of Man came down from heaven, disclosed the secrets of the eternal mind; descended into the grave, and returned to the earth, and showed himself openly. But did infidelity stop her mouth? No. "Some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day," Matt. xxviii. 11—15.

The circumstances in which Moses took his last long farewell of his beloved charge, were such, one would think, as to leave a lasting, an indelible impression on the minds of his hearers; but the sequel shows us, that the impressions of gratitude, sympathy, sorrow and regret, are "as the morning cloud and the early dew, which passeth away."

—Having finished his course, and the time of his departure drawing nigh, we behold the man of God making his final progress through the camp of Israel;

going from tribe to tribe, from standard to standard, saluting every one by his name, and pronouncing over him the cordial benediction of a dying friend. We have accompanied him from Reuben to Judah, and from Judah to Levi, and heard his dying breath confirm the promise of royal dignity to the one, and entail the sacred dignity of the priesthood upon the other. They have heard his last adieu. Their eyes shall behold him no more. He has now arrived at the encampment of Benjamin. Benjamin the son of his mother's sorrow, the son of his father's right hand: the last of Israel in the course of nature, not the least in the affection of his sole surviving parent, nor in importance as one of the heads of the holy commonwealth. Benjamin, destined of Providence to support the throne of David, when shaken by the revolt of ten tribes. And what is the blessing of Benjamin? "Of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders," Deut. xxxiii. 12.

The course in which Moses proceeded in pronouncing the blessing, is supposed by some to be prophetically governed, according to the geographical description of Canaan, and the order and course in which each portion was allotted to every several tribe. Benjamin, therefore, is addressed before his elder brother Joseph, because the lot of his inheritance was to lie between the lots of Judah and Joseph, and to border upon each, and this, by consulting the book of Joshua, xviii. 11, you will find was the case. And we shall afterwards find many circumstances concurring to give a distinction and a consequence to Benjamin, among the tribes of Israel. Jebus, that is Jerusalem, fell to them. Of course, the seat of empire and of religion, in process of time, was fixed in the midst of them. Imperial Judah administered the affairs of government in a city belonging to another tribe, and from the day

that the temple was built, not only the priests the sons of Levi were called to minister in the order of their course, within the confines of their brother Benjamin; but all the males of all the tribes were obliged to appear before the Lord in the same place, at the three great stated festivals every year, besides the innumerable occasional visits made to the metropolis of the whole country, as to the centre of civil government and of religious worship.

On comparing the arrangement of the precious stones in the breast-plate of the high-priest, with that of the same number and quality of gems which are represented as constituting the foundation of the new Jerusalem, we find the *jasper* standing last, with the name of Benjamin engraved upon it, in the breast-plate; but the first in the foundation of the holy city, which is the type of the christian church.

With the aid of Benjamin alone Judah was enabled to support an independent sovereignty, which considerably outlasted the kingdom of the ten tribes. This, and various other circumstances, in the future history and condition of this tribe, explain the blessing of Moses, which describes him as “the beloved of the Lord,” tenderly watched over and protected of Jehovah, as the progenitor of this tribe according to the flesh, was carefully kept at home, and affectionately cherished by his father Jacob; as “dwelling in safety by him,” that is, in confidence, in security, there being “none to make him afraid,” to whom God was so nigh. There is apparently an allusion to this, and a beautiful one, in the 48th Psalm, from verse 1 to 5. “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. For lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were trou-

bled, and hasted away." "The Lord shall cover him," adds Moses, "all day long." "*Cover.*" The Seventy translate the word by one that signifies "to overshadow." The Chaldean paraphrase is, "he shall be a shield over him;" it denotes a security, covering or protection from evil; and the evangelical prophet, Isaiah, beautifully expands the thought in these remarkable words, descriptive of and applied to the same object. "And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from the storm and from rain," Isai. iv. 5, 6. "All day long," or "every day;" that is, continually. "And he shall dwell between his shoulders;" like the head, the glory of the natural body, rearing itself majestically between and upon "the shoulders," the strength and power of the man. This was the blessing of Benjamin.

Moses seems now to turn to a peculiarly favourite object; he seems to rise above himself, the spirit of dying Jacob seems to revive in him. As if the name of Joseph were the fire put to the train, he kindles, he blazes, he lightens. As if the name of Joseph were the signal to be at once great and sublime, tender and pathetic, approaching his standard, recollecting the history and character of their illustrious progenitor, contemplating their rising greatness and prosperity, he thus breaks out in strains loftier than bard ever sung. "Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, and for the precious things of the earth and

fulness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren. His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh," Deut. xxxiii. 13—17. Isaac had but two sons, and found himself exhausted when he had bestowed a blessing upon one of them; Jacob has twelve sons, and yet he has a several blessing for each son. Israel at the death of Moses was increased to an innumerable multitude, and yet there are blessings enough, and to spare, and yet there is room. And when God shall have brought back the captivity of Jacob, when God shall have brought his ancient people within the bond of the gospel covenant, together with the fulness of the Gentile nations, the tide of benediction shall rise, and rise, and swell to the number and necessity of all the partakers. Thus the sacred stream which Ezekiel saw in vision, issuing from the threshold of the house, was at first but a little bubbling fountain; but after a progress of a thousand cubits, became "a brook of water up to the ancles;" after a thousand more, had risen to the height of the loins; and after a thousand more "the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over."

To go into a detail of the particulars contained in the blessing of Joseph, instead of occupying the place of an evening, might furnish employment for years. I feel myself perfectly at a loss how to represent it to your view; in what light first to consider it, what particular part of it to bring forward—whether I should at all presume to attempt an illustration of it, or leave it altogether to your private meditation. Never, surely, in the same quantity of words were exhibited such a mul-

titude and variety of beautiful, striking, and sublime ideas. When Joseph is to be blessed, the prophet for him arrays nature in her gayest, richest attire: for him he digs into the mine, and cleaves the flinty rock, and pours jewels and gold at his feet. "For him the roses blow, for him distils the dew." For him golden harvests wave in the fragrant air, and rivers of milk and oil flow down the mountains and through the vallies. For him the swelling clusters of the vine assume a purple hue, the meadows clothe themselves with verdure, and the cedars of God lift their proud heads to the skies; the sun and moon, and eleven stars, do obeisance to him. Nature is then animated, as it were, to do him honour, to give him protection, to extend his empire, to minister to his delight. The grove becomes vocal, the bullock treads stately through the plain, the unicorn pushes with the horn, nations of enemies melt before him, the ten thousands of Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh, cultivate their fertile, peaceful fields, beautify their pleasant villages, fortify their magnificent cities.

With inexhausted strength, with resistless force, the prophet then hurries us out of the sphere of nature, bears us to the awful regions of religion, places our feet on holy ground. It is the blessing of Joseph, and we feel ourselves transported to the wilderness of Horeb, we behold the bush on fire, we hear the voice of God himself from the midst of the flame. But though it speaks from the midst of fire, to the house of Joseph it speaks nothing but love, it is a fire that consumes not, it breathes "good will." Moses having thus as a poet touched every power of imagination, conducted us from one scene of delight to another, and made all Eden rise to view; having, as a prophet, unveiled the world of spirits to our astonished sight, and borne us as on eagles' wings up to the throne of God, gently deviates into his character of orator and historian, and sweetly re-descends with us into the

field of Zoan, and calls forth a tender sigh from our bosom over the hapless youth who was torn from his father's embrace, and sold into slavery. "Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren," Deut. xxxiii. 16. But "who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" Job xxxviii. 2. Moses, my friends, seems reluctant to break off this subject, he is loth to bid Joseph farewell; as he goes he "casts a longing lingering look behind," and sighs out another blessing, after his tongue is silent. When Jacob speaks to Joseph, and Moses writes and speaks of him, neither of them knows how to leave off.

We soon find the prediction of Moses verified, and the parting benediction falling down, according to the letter of it, in copious showers upon the head of Joseph. For though half the tribe of Manasseh obtained an inheritance beyond Jordan, and a fair and spacious lot had fallen to the rest of the sons of Joseph in Canaan, they are soon under the necessity of applying to Joshua for an additional lot to enlarge their border. "And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the Lord hath blessed me hitherto? And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood-country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants, if mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee. And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who are of Beth-shean and her towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel. And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to Manasseh, saying, Thou art a great people, and hast great power: thou shalt not have one lot only:

but the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the out-goings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong," Joshua xvii. 14—18.

The Jewish writers take delight in expatiating upon the beauty and fruitfulness of the providentially allotted portion of this tribe. They represent Canaan as a garden, in comparison to the rest of the world, and mount Ephraim with its adjacent plains as the garden of Canaan. But we must hasten from it, and attend our departing prophet, as he bids a shorter adieu to the remaining tribes.

As the lots of Zebulun and Issachar were to be contiguous in Canaan; as they were brothers german, being both sons of Leah, and thereby had a nearer interest and affection among themselves, and their tents were pitched contiguous to each other in the plains of Moab, Moses addresses them as forming one body of people. "And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and Issachar, in thy tents," Deut. xxxiii. 18. This is, with little variation, a repetition and confirmation of the blessing pronounced by dying Jacob. Zebulun the younger of the two brothers is in both referred; and in distributing the lots Zebulun has the third lot, Issachar only the fourth. The inheritance of Zebulun was to be of a peculiar quality, and they were to draw their subsistence and wealth from sources very different from those of the rest of Israel; they were to grow great by navigation and trade.

The sea, that unruly element, was to be made tributary to them, and through it, a passage opened to them to the vast, populous and wealthy shores of Africa on the south, and of Asia and Europe on the north. "They shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand. They shall call the people unto the mountain, there they shall offer sacrifices of

righteousness," Deut. xxxiii. 19. The Chaldean applies these words peculiarly to Issachar, and translates them thus. "Rejoice Issachar, that is, be thou blessed in thy going to appoint the times of the solemn feasts of Israel," which has a reference to what we read of this tribe, 1 Chron. xii. 32. "And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do: the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment." This is generally understood of the times and seasons of the year, of the new moons and other appearances of the heavenly bodies, by which the solemn festivals were regulated, and which they of Issachar, by their astronomical observation and skill, calculated for the use of all Israel. Hence, they are represented in the blessing of Moses as calling the people "unto mount Zion, where the temple was." Thus, we see every tribe had some separate and distinct province, some peculiar benefit and privilege, that in the commonwealth of Israel, as in the natural body, there might be no schism, nor the hand be able to say to the eye or to the foot; "I have no need of thee."

Moses advances to the tents of Gad with these words upon his tongue. "Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head. And he provideth the first part for himself, because there in a portion of the law-giver was he seated: and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the Lord, and his judgments with Israel," Deut. xxxiii. 20, 21. The enlargement of Gad may refer to his inheritance, which God hereby promised to extend, as he did that of Israel in general. "I will enlarge thy border;" or it may be understood of his person, and will then imply deliverance out of trouble, in which sense the word is used, Psalm iv. 1. "Thou hast enlarged me when

I was in distress.” If so, the words of Moses refer to the troubles of Gad, prophesied of by his dying father, and the history of the deliverance and enlargement of that tribe, from the hands of their enemies, Jephtha the Gileadite. We read of Gadites in David’s time, who were “mighty men of valour,” whose faces were like the “faces of lions” and were “as swift as the roes upon the mountains.” Hence he is said “to dwell as a lion, and to tear the arm with the crown of the head;” the emblems of sovereignty and strength, innuming that none should be so high or powerful, but the might of Gad should bring him down. The blessing in the 21st verse plainly refers to the provision already made for this tribe in conjunction with Rueben, and the half tribe of Manasseh, in the kingdoms of Og and Sihon. “And he provided the first part for himself, because there in a portion of the law-giver was he seated: and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the Lord, and his judgments with Israel,” Deut. xxxiii. 21.

The younger children of a numerous family, are to a stranger so many uninteresting, insignificant names; they have a mere family likeness, they speedily become undistinguishable, we mistake the one for the other. It is not so with the parents; they have distinguishing marks for each, they have a particular affection for every one; they have something to say to, to say of, every one. Thus Dan and Naphtali and Asher are to us so many words without a meaning; but in the eyes of Moses all have a special importance, each particular blessing has a special meaning, and the last is not the least in his affection. But as strangers we pass by the rest, and distinct ideas of only two or three of Judah and Levi, and Benjamin and Joseph, cleave to our memory; these we would know among ten thousand, these we can never forget.

We must now suppose Moses to have finished his round, to have returned to his place; and closing the

solemn scene with taking a general survey of the whole, he rises from the goodly tents of Israel, to the contemplation and acknowledgment of Israel's God, and he finally desists from speaking and acting, in rapturous admiration of Him in whom he lived, moved and breathed; he begins heaven on earth, by pouring out his soul in the bosom of the God of heaven and earth. "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone; the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine, also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places," Deut. xxxiii. 26—29.

—Moses pronounced a blessing which he could not bestow, which has long ago spent itself, the effects of which are no longer visible. Christ led out his disciples as far as to Bethany: "and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them," Luke xxiv. 50. He pronounced a blessing in his power to confer, which has not spent its force, which reaches into eternity: "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I *am* with you always, even unto the end of the world," Mat. xxviii. 19, 20. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." "All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth." What are the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them? What is now

the land which once flowed with milk and honey? Where are now “the ten thousands of Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh?” The blessing even of Joseph has failed, and the beauty of mount Ephraim is no more. But we receive from our greater prophet “a kingdom which cannot be moved; an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away.” His benediction embraces a globe; extends from generation to generation; unites his second to his first coming; expands a new creation, “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;” exalts guilty, fallen men to the dignity of the sons of God. Let him bless me, and I shall be blessed. Lord, lift thou upon me the light of thy countenance, and I shall be saved; breathe upon me, and I shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

—The blessing of Moses implied succession and change, contention and triumph; exhibited the “confused noise of the warrior, and garments rolled in blood,” the exaltation of one on the depression of another: the blessing of Christ presents stability and permanency, harmony, and peace, equality and acquiescence; exhibits only the noble contention of generous and affectionate spirits, the triumphs of benevolence; the spirit of adoption bursting from every lip, *Abba Father*; the spirit of brotherly love glowing in every bosom, tuning the tongue to the law of kindness, beaming from the eye in looks of tenderness. A greater than Moses is with us: we “are not under the law, but under grace.”

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE XI.

And Moses went up from the plains of Moab, unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho: and the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm-trees, unto Zoar. And the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-Peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.—
DEUT. XXXIV. 1—6.

WHEN strangers accidentally meet to perform together the same voyage or journey, they are apt, at first, to regard each other with looks of caution and distrust; they converse sparingly, and with reserve; they conceal their views and purposes in their own breasts; they attempt to dive into the characters and designs of their fellow-travellers. By degrees this suspicious cautiousness wears off; it becomes their

mutual desire and endeavour to please and oblige, they feel themselves united by a common interest, their communications become frequent and free, they discover all that is in their hearts, they take a kind concern in each other's future fortunes, they exchange tokens of affection, they devise the means of coming together again, and part at length with regret. We seem, my brethren, to have been travelling through a vast country; we seem to have been conversing with men of a different age and religion; we have contemplated many a fair prospect, we have marked many successive changes, and, at the end of another stage or two, we must separate, and bid each other farewell. Like men acquainted and friendly, who know each other's meaning, and wish each other's happiness, we look back to our common pilgrimage with some degree of satisfaction, and forward, I trust, with some degree of desire to meet together again. The mutual token which, in the mean time, we shall carry with us to stir up our minds by way of remembrance, is one that touches the heart by more than one spring, the memory of a dear and estimable common friend, who has contributed much to our pleasure and improvement, who was lovely and pleasant in life, and in death fills the soul with admiration and regret; but whom we have the felicity of considering as having only preceded us a little in a journey, on which we too have already entered, and the end of which will bring us to the same home with him.

The pen has now dropt from the hand of Moses, and silent is his tongue; and another, not himself, must tell us what he is, and how he died. Every scene in the life of this illustrious man is singular, and as instructive as singular; and his latter end is not the least interesting and useful. He had now completed his one hundred and twentieth year, without having become subject to the usual infirmities of that advanced age. It is one thing to live long, and another to be

old. We frequently see old age commenced by many woful symptoms, long before the man has begun to live at all: and we sometimes see the wisdom and piety of grey hairs giving lustre to the bloom of youth, and tempering the vivacity of the morning of life. We wish to live long, but we weakly associate what never met, except in Moses and a favoured few like him, perfect soundness of faculties and the capacity of enjoying life, united to length of days and richness of experience. We wish to live long, but fail to reflect on dimness of eyes, decay of memory, wasting of strength, loss of appetite, the neglect or unkindness of friends, and the other concomitants of that forlorn period. We wish to live long, but if the days come we find them evil; when these wished-for years draw nigh we are constrained to acknowledge “we have no pleasure in them.” The few, the very few exceptions the history of mankind furnishes, from the general rule, serve only the more grievously to confirm it. Happy would it be for old men, however, happy for themselves, and most happy for others, though they cannot retain at pleasure the clear-sightedness and vigour of Moses, did they cultivate as they ought, and acquire as they might, something of his meekness and gentleness and condescension; they would not have such frequent reason to complain of the petulance, self-sufficiency and presumption of young men, if they themselves would learn to be less peevish, and obstinate, and overbearing. For, bad as the world is, age will obtain respect, unless it take pains to provoke insult and disrespect.

The death of Moses, then, was not in the ordinary course of nature, it was not preceded by its usual harbingers, it was not occasioned by a failure of the radical moisture, by the stroke of violence, or the malignity of disease, but by a simple act of the will of God. Wherefore, then, “should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?” When we

see the antediluvian patriarchs living to one thousand years, the eye of Moses, at one hundred and twenty, not dim, nor his natural force abated, and “Christ, the first fruits,” bursting asunder the bars of the grave; have we not so many concurring presumptions and proofs of immortality and the resurrection? And what must be the angelic beauty, the celestial vigour, the undecaying lustre and glory of bodies “fashioned like to Christ’s glorious body,” when we see the face of Moses shine, that it could not be steadfastly looked at, and preserving to life’s extremity the morning dew of youth? The honour put on Moses was rare and singular, but the glory to be revealed is a blessedness of which all the redeemed of the Lord shall partake.

When the summons arrived for Aaron to prepare for death, Moses, his brother, and Eleazar, his son and successor, were commanded to ascend the mountain with him, and to assist in the solemnities of the awful change: but Moses advances alone to meet death, to meet his God. The holy vestments, with the office to which they appertained, descended from father to son, and were at length done away altogether and lost; but the moral and spiritual parts of the dispensation never waxed old, could not see corruption, but like God, their author, were unchangeable; and like Moses, by whom they were delivered to the world, unenfeebled by length of time, continued till Christ, the restorer of all things, interwove them with the tissue of the gospel, and conferred immortality upon them.

—We must now look back to the sentence of death pronounced against Moses, and to the crime which provoked the irreversible doom: “And the Lord spake unto Moses that self-same day, saying, Get thee up into this mountain, Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gath-

ered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people: because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel. Yet thou shalt see the land before thee, but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel," Deut. xxxii. 48—52. Here many things concur to surprise and instruct us. The offence of Moses seems a venial one; he erred merely through hastiness of spirit; and had he not good cause to be angry? He was not often so overtaken, he quickly repented, and recovered tranquillity and self-government again. He repeatedly attempted to soften justice by submission and entreaty; he asked for nothing unreasonable or absurd: he wished merely to be a witness of the divine bounty, truth and faithfulness; infinitely greater offenders had at his entreaty been forgiven and restored. But justice relented not, Moses for one offence must die; the grace which he often obtained for others is to himself denied. Let the wretch loaded with a thousand crimes black as hell, and malignant as the spirit that reigns in the children of disobedience, think of this and tremble. That "fool makes a mock of sin." "Father, forgive him, he knows not what he does." One transgression excluded Moses from Canaan; and with so many imperfections on his head, loaded with so many crimes of a nature so vile and atrocious, can he think of entering into the kingdom of heaven? When we see such inflexible and unrelenting severity pursuing the dearest and most distinguished of God's children, who shall dare to think or to call any sin a little one? Who shall presume on mercy, who shall dream of washing away his guilt by the tears of penitence, who shall harden himself against God and hope to prosper? The great crime in the sight of God is, giving that glory to another which belongeth to him. For this Moses

died without remedy, from the consequence of this he could not escape, though he sought it carefully, and with tears.

The character of Moses comes near to perfection, but it is not faultless; he too, with the *guiltiest*, stands in need of pardon and atonement; and when "righteousness is laid to the line and judgment to the plummet," his life must pay the forfeit. Moses therefore could not be a saviour to others; had his conduct been perfectly pure, it had been still but the righteousness of a man, it could but have delivered his own soul, it could have merited nothing at the hands of a holy God. In order to constitute a saviour for the guilty, to unspotted purity of moral character must be superadded divinity of nature, to give efficacy and virtue to suffering, and value to the shedding of blood. Thus the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; and "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh," Rom. viii. 3. We flee to thee, blessed Jesus, to cover us in the day of wrath; thy blood cleanseth from all sin; by the deeds of the law we cannot be justified, we look for redemption from the curse, through thy meritorious death and righteousness, "for the forgiveness of all our sins, according to the riches of thy grace."

But though death was to Moses a mark of the divine displeasure, and the punishment of sin; like all the chastenings of fatherly wisdom, like all the punishments of Heaven, it was in the issue, and upon the whole, a real benefit, it was unspeakably great gain: it relieved him of a burthen sometimes ready to prove intolerable, it introduced him to communion with God more intimate and endearing than ever he had hitherto enjoyed; it placed him among the spirits of just men made perfect. Moses died in the sight of the promised land, was permitted to measure it with his eye, and

to judge of its fertility from specimens of its produce: and all that the labours and light of those who are fellow-workers with Moses can do, is to repeat the promise, to point with the finger and to say, "This is the way, walk ye in it." It belongs to another power to subdue corruption, to divide Jordan, to level the walls of proud Jericho.

We know the offence, we have heard the doom, the reprieve is expired, the warrant of death is signed, the day of execution is come. But the bitterness of death is over already, the sting of death is plucked out, and even the word that condemns and kills the body, is a word of love. A worldly mind cannot discern the reason why the cross is the way, why death is in the cup, why the entrance into the kingdom of God is through the thorny road of much tribulation; but the child of God, the disciple of Jesus, has ceased from himself and from his own will and understanding: "He knows whom he has believed," and who has said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten:" he sees death in the list of his privileges and possessions, and is assured that all shall work together for his good.

Moses has fulfilled like a hireling his day, has written, has spoken, has judged, has prayed, has blessed; the business of life is ended; he has glorified God on earth, it only remains that he glorify him, by submission to his sovereign will, in dying. Behold him then solitarily and solemnly advancing to encounter the last enemy: he has passed through the plain, and again he begins to climb up into the mount to meet God. The eyes of all Israel are rivetted to his footsteps. Who is not ready to cry out, "Would to God I could die for thee." Every step he advances plants a dagger in the heart. The distance begins to render vision indistinct, his person is diminished to a speck, they fondly imagine they see him still, the eyes strain for another and another glimpse, they are suffused with tears, they

can behold him no more. But he still beholds their goodly tents, he sees all Israel collected into one point of view; Jehovah dwelling in the midst of his people, the tabernacle with the pillar of cloud resting upon it: his affection with his sight is concentrated on the happy spot, his whole soul goes out in one general departing blessing. As he ascends, the prospect expands and brightens to his ravished eye. He can trace Jordan from its source, till it falls into the sea; he wanders with delight from hill to hill, from plain to plain. He sees on this side mount Lebanon losing its lofty head in the clouds; on that, the ocean and the sky meeting together to terminate his view. Beneath his feet, as it were, the city of palm-trees, and the happy fields which the posterity of Joseph were destined to inhabit. The land which Abraham had measured with his foot in the length and the breadth of it; in which Isaac and Jacob had sojourned as strangers; which God had fenced, and cultivated, and planted, and enriched by the hand of the Canaanite for his beloved people; which the sun irradiated with milder beams, the dew of heaven refreshed with sweeter moisture, and the early and the latter rain fattened in more copious showers. “And the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither,” Deut. xxxiv. 4.

But what is the glory of this world? It passeth away. What is the felicity of man, who must die, and of the son of man, who is a worm? It cometh quickly to a period. The eye which age had not made dim, must nevertheless be closed in death at length; the strength which a hundred and twenty years had not been able to impair, is in a moment by one touch of the finger of God dissolved; the heart which God and Israel had so long divided, is now wholly occupied with God. In the midst of a vision so divine Moses

gently falls asleep: and he who falls asleep in the bosom of a father, needs be under no anxiety about his awakening. "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord," Deut. xxxiv. 5. Moses died with Canaan full in view, enjoying every thing but possession; and the utmost that his dispensation can do, is to ascertain the existence of the heavenly country; to describe its boundaries, nature and situation; to conduct to its limits, and to put us under the conduct of the great Captain of salvation.

When we see the prophet of the law so far from having power to introduce others into their promised rest, that he himself could not enter in because of unbelief; we are admonished to court the protection and assistance of a more potent arm; to cleave to Him, who, by dying, has overcome death, and him who has the power of death; "who openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth."

But Oh, what a blessed transition! from the fairest earthly prospect that eye ever beheld, to the enjoyment of a fairer inheritance, eternal in the heavens; from the tents of Jacob, to the encampment of angels under Michael their prince; from a glory confined and transitory, to glory unbounded, unchangeable; from the symbol of the divine presence, in a pillar of fire and cloud, to his real presence, where there is "fulness of joy," and where "there are pleasures for evermore," Psalm xvi. 11, to see him as he is, and to be transformed into the same image from glory to glory. Behold Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, rushing from their thrones to welcome to the realms of light the shepherd of Israel, who had led the chosen seed from strength to strength, from triumph to triumph, while the voice of the Eternal himself proclaims, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord."

But we must descend from this exceeding high

mountain, and inquire after the breathless clay of the servant of the Lord. It is precious in the sight of God; not a particle of it shall be lost in the grave, and it shall be raised up at the last day. In every other instance he leaves the dead to bury their dead; but he charges himself with the body of Moses, performs himself the rites of sepulture, conveys it by the ministration of angels, from the top of Nebo to a tomb of his own providing, "in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-poer: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day," Deut. xxxiv. 6.

The reason commonly assigned for concealing the place where Moses was interred, was to prevent a superstitious use of his tomb and relics, which a people so prone to idolatry might readily have adopted, and with as good a colour of reason at least as the votaries of any hero, prince or saint that ever was deified, could ever alledge for their conduct. The scripture saith expressly, that, at the time this conclusion of the book of Deuteronomy was written, whether by Joshua, his immediate successor, by Samuel, three hundred and fifty years afterwards, or by Ezra, after the dissolution of the monarchy, and the Babylonish captivity, that then the place of Moses' burial was unknown to any man, and had been so from the beginning; and yet such is the wickedness of imposture on the one hand, and the fondness of credulity on the other, that so late as the year of our Lord 1655, a pretended discovery of the spot was made, and attempted to be imposed upon the world.

The outlines of the story are as follows: "Certain shepherds who were feeding their goats on the mountains of Nebo and Abarim, observed that some of their charge were in use to disappear, and were absent for several days together; and that upon their return to the flock, their hair was perfumed with something that smelled extremely sweet. This excited their curiosity, and determined them to investigate the affair with the

utmost accuracy. They accordingly traced their goats, and were led by them through rugged and rocky places to a little vale, where, upon examination, they discovered a kind of cave, out of which proceeded a very agreeable smell, resembling that which the goats conveyed on their fleeces, and had first suggested the inquiry. In the middle of the cave they found a tomb of stone, on which certain characters were engraven, which, being illiterate, they could not decypher; but they soon perceived that the sweet smell was communicated to their persons and garments. Upon this they went immediately to Mataxat, patriarch of the Maronites, who resided at the monastery of St. Mary, on mount Lebanon, and related to him the particulars of their discovery. The fragrance that still adhered to their clothes confirming their testimony, he sent two of his monks with them; one of them, a man of profound erudition, named Aben-Useph, who found, in the place pointed out to them, a monument inscribed with these words in Hebrew, MOSES THE SERVANT OF THE LORD. The patriarch, transported with joy at a discovery so marvellous, besought *Morat*, Pacha of Damascus, to constitute him sole guardian of the sepulchre. But the Greeks and Arminians, as well as the Franciscan friars, and after them the Jews, violently opposed it, and unable to agree, tried by dint of interest at court, by presents to the Mufti and Grand Visier, to appropriate each to themselves the superintendence of this tomb, which they equally believed to be that of Moses, and which the Jews, with peculiar earnestness, insisted must belong to them. They represented that, among all the possessions of the Grand Signor, none could be more valuable and illustrious than the property of three sepulchres so renowned as that of Mahomet at Mecca, of Jesus Christ at Jerusalem, and of Moses in mount Nebo. But the Jesuits had the address, by presents happily applied, to defeat the claims of all these pretenders, and to obtain an

order for shutting up the sepulchre, and obstructing the road that led to it; nay, for prohibiting all access to it, under pain of death. They were meanwhile forming a design of secretly conveying off the body of Moses, which they flattered themselves would prove a considerable accession of respectability, and a new source of wealth to their order. Having, however, with much difficulty and danger, penetrated into the sepulchre, it was found entirely empty; no body, no relics appeared.”* These pleasing chimeras vanished almost as soon as formed; for a learned Rabbin proved that the person interred in this tomb, was not the ancient legislator of the Hebrews, but a modern Jew of the same name.

The sacred history says, that Moses died the fortieth year after the deliverance from Egypt, and the most part of the Jewish writers fix the day of his death to the seventh day of the last month of that year, or the month Adar; and our learned and pious countryman, archbishop of Usher, calculates it to have happened on the first day of the same month.

There is a passage in the New Testament which refers to this event, and which has greatly exercised the labour and ingenuity of critics and commentators: it is in the general epistle of Jude, where that disciple, in reproving the rashness and licentiousness of certain heretics, “who despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities,” quotes an example of very high authority, as condemning the practice: “Yet,” says he, “Michael the arch-angel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee,” Jude 9.

Now, as many questions almost as words have been started on this subject: what is an arch-angel; and who is Michael? How came the body of Moses to be

* Hornius, *Secul. XVII. Art. XXXII. p. 556.*

a ground of controversy between him and the devil, what were they severally aiming at, and what was the issue of their quarrel? What authority restrained Michael from preferring a railing accusation against him, how his conduct comes to be adduced as a pattern of self-government, and a reproof of the vices of the tongue? And from what source did Jude derive his knowledge of this transaction? The very mention of so many, some of them, on the first glance, unimportant questions, will, I doubt not, check curiosity altogether, instead of exciting it. It is evident, that the death and burial of Moses interested heaven and earth and hell; that many historical facts of great moment are purposely left unrecorded; that many discoveries are reserved for that great and notable day of the Lord, when God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil; that it becomes not us to be wise above what is written, but to rest in hope, that “what we know not now, we shall know hereafter.” This much we know, that, about fifteen hundred years after, Moses appeared in glory (“whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth”) to do homage to his Saviour on the mount of transfiguration, and to lay his glory at the feet of him in whose light he shone; and we know “the hour is coming, when all who are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation,” John v. 28, 29.

Such was the latter end of, “take him for all in all,” the greatest mere man that ever existed. But I check myself. It is impossible to do any thing like justice to such a character in a few moments of discourse: you will indulge me with another hearing on this subject; I mean, to preach a funeral sermon: the only one I ever undertook without pain, over a character

and a memory to which no eloquence can rise, no detail do justice; in celebrating which, praise cannot degenerate into panegyric, nor the preacher be suspected of adulation.

Moses died in the year of the world two thousand five hundred and fifty-three—before Christ one thousand four hundred and fifty—after the flood eight hundred and ninety-seven. The most ancient and authentic of historians, the most penetrating, dignified, and illuminated of prophets, the profoundest, sagest of legislators, the prince of orators and poets, the most excellent and amiable of men, the firmest and faithfulest of believers. “Whether we live, let us live unto the Lord,” that when we die we may “die in the Lord;” that “living and dying we may be the Lord’s.”

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE XII.

And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel.—DEUT. xxxiv. 10—12.

THERE is in mankind a good-natured disposition to spare the dead. Without very high provocation indeed, who could think of disturbing the peace and silence of the grave, and of dragging again before the tribunal of man those who have already undergone the more awful judgment of a righteous God?

But this generosity does not always proceed from pure benevolence. The dead no longer stand in our way; they are no longer our rivals in the pursuits of fame or of fortune. We can here earn the praise of magnanimity, without any danger of suffering in the interests of our reputation, our consequence, our self-love. From whatever source this lenity and forbearance proceed, we would not be thought altogether to condemn them; but good-nature in this, as in a few other cases, is apt sometimes to be carried too far. Through fear of being thought severe to those who have no power to defend themselves, extravagant and

unmerited commendation has been often lavished on the worthless and the wicked. I will cheerfully engage not to violate the ashes of the dead by unjust censure, nor even by merited invective; but I must not be forced, on the other hand, to commemorate virtues that were never practised; to bring to light worth that never existed, except in the tropes of a funeral oration; to represent as right, what God, and truth, and reason pronounce to be wrong. My tongue shall be silent as the grave over the memory of the proudest, most selfish, hard-hearted, unkind, uncomplying wretch that ever lived; but I must not be called in to prostitute my conscience by celebrating his humility, generosity, compassion, or sweetness of temper. I would correct the common adage a little, and then give it all the currency in my power. Instead of rendering it, “of the dead say that only which is *good*,” I would translate it, “of the dead say that only which is *true*.”

Indeed, the best thing that can befall most men, when they die, is to be forgotten as soon as possible. Few, very few characters are such as not to suffer by handling; and there is great danger of rousing and provoking slumbering resentments against our departed friends, by an officious zeal to trumpet their praise, and display their good qualities. The praise bestowed on the dead is generally contemptible adulation to the living; adulation, vilely bestowing the rewards of piety and goodness on mere greatness or affluence, and thereby strengthening the hands of vice, by lulling the conscience to rest, and deceiving men into the belief, that a good name may be purchased without possessing a spark of virtue.

The liturgy of our established church, in how many other respects soever useful and excellent, is here faulty, and certainly does mischief. The funeral service, one of the noblest, because one of the most scriptural parts of it, with indiscriminating charity dispenses the

kingdom of heaven to the evil and the good, to "him that sweareth as to him who feareth an oath."

The wretch whose whole life has been a notorious violation of every law human and divine, who grew old in hatred and contempt of the gospel, falls asleep in the "sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life." What is this but to encourage men to continue in sin, that grace may abound; to live profligates, and yet hope to die in peace?

Happily, the character we are this evening to bring under your review will stand the test of the strictest examination, will shine with superior lustre from being touched and retouched, will discover new excellencies on every investigation, will furnish to the humble, the penitent, and the believing, perpetual ground of instruction and consolation. After a course of more than fourscore Lectures on the life, character, and writings of Moses, it may perhaps be thought superfluous, to employ the whole of another discourse in attempting to elucidate his character, to recommend his example, to embalm his memory. But it is this very circumstance which determined me to attempt a delineation of this wonderful man's portrait, to request that you would join me in meditating a few moments over one who has been honoured of God, to do more, in order to please and instruct mankind, than any mere man that ever existed. To say truth, I consider the person of Moses as a pledge of affection between you and myself. He brought us together at first, and he has kept us together a considerable part of these three years past; to part with him and his writings seems a kind of presentiment of our final dissolution likewise; and, in losing him, I feel as if I were losing a thousand friends at a stroke. But let us speak and think of Moses, not of ourselves.

It is impossible to think of Moses without first thinking of "his Father and our Father, of his God and our God." To be a chosen instrument in the hand of

Heaven to carry on the plans of Providence, to promote the wisdom and the happiness of mankind, is man's highest glory: as it is his truest felicity to do this voluntarily and from the heart, as an obedient, zealous, and cheerful fellow-worker with God. Now, Moses possessed this distinction and felicity in a very eminent degree. God raised up Pharaoh "in very deed for this cause, to show in him his power, that his great name might be declared throughout all the earth;" and Pharaoh, unhappily for himself, accomplished the designs of Heaven, by his pride, obstinacy and rebellion. God called "Cyrus his anointed, by name, and surnamed him who had not known him, for Jacob his servant's sake, and Israel his elect." Nebuchadnezzar he employed as the rod of his anger to chastise a disobedient and gainsaying people, and then broke it in pieces and dashed it to the ground. These, and many others, stand upon record, as executing the will of the Eternal without their own consciousness or intention, nay, totally against it; but Moses had the rare felicity of engaging in one of the most generous purposes which can animate a human breast, knowing it to be, at the same time, the leading, commanding purpose of God himself. Every step he moved was supported by the enlivening reflection, that every step he moved was executing the decrees of the Almighty, and promoting the relief and salvation of his wretched countrymen. How delightful the progress, when duty and inclination go hand in hand!

The circumstances in which God raised up Moses mark him peculiarly as his own. Every thing concurred to prove, that here "the arm of the Lord was revealed." Another king had arisen, "who knew not Joseph," the hope of Israel seemed to be perishing; Egypt was alarmed with expectation, or rather apprehension, of the appearance of this wonderful child; Israel was awakened to expectation, but abandoned it in despair. To reach the life of one, ten

thousand innocents perish by the sword. But, as if in defiance of the precautions of human wisdom, Moses is born in the very rage of that persecution which threatened his life. The daughter of Pharaoh becomes his protector, and Egyptian Magi vie with each other in rearing that genius, whose ascendant threatened the downfall of their country; and Moses is become great, before the world apprehends that it is he by whose hand God would deliver his people from bondage.

This brings us forward to the period when his personal character began plainly to unfold itself; and it discovers to us a mind superior to every mean, every selfish gratification. Men love to adopt the cause that prevails; and the cause of Israel was at that time low indeed. At a certain period of life passion bears unlimited sway. At forty, the calls of ambition and pride are loudest; and they who are themselves at ease are little disposed to embark in the miseries of others. But in Moses behold a man, not sunk into poverty violently obtruded upon him, but poverty deliberately chosen; a man of forty relinquishing, without reluctance or regret, the pleasures, riches and honours of a court, and exchanging them for the labour and oppression of an Israelitish slave, and glorying in the reproachful name of Hebrew, much more than in that of "the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Behold the manly indignation of a noble spirit hastening to avenge wretchedness and depression of insolence and cruelty, and in the punishment of one oppressor exhibiting an anticipated view of that great deliverance which, in process of time, God was by him to work in behalf of a whole people.

The spirit which beheld Egyptian oppression with just resentment, beheld discord among brethren with godly sorrow and regret. He boldly exposed his life to repel the one; in the spirit of meekness he tried to heal the other; and he very early experienced the un-

gracious, and ungrateful, and discouraging requital of services the most kindly intended; the sad presage of that life of mortification unparalled, and most unmerited, which he was afterwards called to endure. The insolent retort of an unkind brother awakened prudence, and put him for a season to flight; for valour, as the case then stood, valour against such fearful odds, could not have deserved the name of courage, but of rashness.

Providence still directs his path, and conducts him at once to usefulness and happiness. It seems as if the all-wise Jehovah meant to display in Moses an example of the great and of the petty virtues, the virtues of the man, of the citizen, and of the believer united; and in none of his future exploits, perhaps, is he more amiable and more estimable than in protecting the virgin daughters of Jethro from the violence of their rough and surly neighbours. Here we behold again on what delicate hinges the great God turns round the affairs of men. This piece of natural, honest, commendable gallantry, introduces Moses to the acquaintance of a prince, lays the foundation of an important alliance for life, and influences all his future fortunes, and feelings, as a man.

Hence we are conducted to the delicious, the calm, the contemplative period of our hero's mortal existence. We behold a simple shepherd tending a flock not his own, but enjoying tranquillity and contentment; secluded from the society of men, but blessed with the visions of the Almighty; losing himself in sweet oblivion of a busy, bustling world, awake only to the innocent joys of domestic life, and the sublimer pleasures of religion. It was in all probability in this delightful retreat, during this blessed interval of retirement from and unconnectedness with what passed on the great theatre, that, divinely taught, he sung "how the heavens and earth rose out of chaos." It was then and there that the Divine Spirit disclosed

to his astonished, his enraptured eye, the years beyond the flood, the spring-season of nature, the first man whom God created upon the earth, the amiableness of pure primeval innocence, the glories of paradise, the unlimited bounty of indulgent Heaven. It was then and there, that good Spirit put the pen into his hand, to trace that sacred record, which has descended to us for our delight and instruction, which shall remain, till time expire, the wonder, the monitor, the guide of mankind unto all manner of truth.

What a happy period for the human race! how happy for himself. Were the will of man to prevail, who would exchange such a retirement as this, for the noise and glare which captivates fools? But men, such as Moses, are not made for themselves alone; and ill would he have improved the blessings of solitude, had he not learned in it, cheerfully to sacrifice his own humour and his own ease to the work and glory of God.

The time to favour Israel was now come, and Moses must think of privacy and self-enjoyment no longer. By a vision, such as might appal the boldest, and encourage the most fearful, he is remanded to Egypt with a commission, under the seal of Heaven, to haughty Pharaoh, and he fears no more the wrath of a king.

But we have insensibly deviated into the history of Moses, instead of delineating his character. Are they not, however, one and the same thing? To know what he was, we have but to consider what he said, and how he acted. But how is it possible to comprise, within the bounds of one discourse, a detail of forty active, busy years, from the day that God appeared to him in a flame of fire in the bush, to the day of his ascending to the top of mount Nebo to die? In general, they contain a display of almost every human shining virtue, brought forward to the eye, and impressed on the heart, by their most lovely foil, modesty, meekness and humility. What magnanimity! united to what

coolness and self-government! what firmness and intrepidity! what patience and gentleness! what consummate wisdom! what amiable simplicity! in youth, in maturity, in old age; in public and in private life; in every relation and condition, who is like him, who deserves to be compared with him? In forming an idea of human excellence, Moses presents himself immediately to my view; it is no longer an idea, it is a delightful reality.

The more attentive part of my hearers will observe that, to complete the proposed plan of this discourse, there is still wanting the general leading idea of all these discourses, the resemblance between the type and the person typified—the analogy of Moses and Christ. This I refer to another Lecture; and beg leave to subjoin, as a proper sequel to this, the following eulogium of Moses, translated from the works of an eloquent critic of his writings.*

EULOGIUM OF MOSES.

“This most extraordinary personage was presented to the world in very singular circumstances. He appeared at a period of peculiar affliction to his kindred and nation; and divine Providence seems to have raised him up expressly for the purpose of exemplifying virtues, which distress and persecution alone are calculated to place in the fairest point of light. By a series of miraculous events he escaped, in infancy, the fatal effects of a sanguinary decree, which doomed to death all the male children of the Hebrews, from the womb. And, what highly merits consideration, and serves strikingly to display the influence which Sovereign Wisdom exercises over all the affairs of men, he owed his preservation, in a great measure, to persons

* Discours Hist. Critiques, &c. sur les Evenemens memorables du vieux Testament. par JACQUES SAURIN, Tome I. Discours LXX.

whose interest it was to have destroyed him. These very persons assisted in forming that superior genius, and in cultivating those wonderful talents, which, in time, qualified him to be the deliverer of a nation which it was their intention utterly to extirpate.

“ Scarcely arrived at that stage of life when men begin to form plans for the remainder of their existence, he feels himself called to determine between two objects, so incompatible in their nature, that the maturest judgment can with difficulty hold the balance even; religion and worldly interest. Under the necessity of making a choice so difficult, he rises above his age, above his passions, nay, in some sense, above humanity, and nobly sacrifices every worldly prospect to religion. He resolves to partake in the miseries of an oppressed people, in order to secure an interest in the favour of that God who is continually watching over his children, even when he seems to have abandoned them to their persecutors; he values nothing in comparison with that favour; he prizes it infinitely more than that of a great king, nay, more than the prospect itself of being heir to a throne and kingdom; and, according to the expression of St. Paul, *Esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt*, Heb. xi. 26.

“ Not satisfied with being a spectator and a partaker of the misery of his wretched brethren, he resolves to meet the torrent; and, of a witness, hastens to become the avenger of the tyranny under which they groaned. Observing one of the merciless tools of oppression abusing an Israelite, he braves the rigour of all the laws of Egypt, kills the oppressor, delivers the sufferer, and, as we have said in another place, performs an anticipated act of the *deliverer of his country*.

“ Prudence constrains him to withdraw from the danger which threatened the stranger who dared to shed the blood of an Egyptian. He retires into the land of Midian, and there experiences repeated proofs

of the care of that miraculous Providence which accompanied him through the whole course of a long life. Cut off from every opportunity of displaying the qualities of the hero, he exhibits those of the philosopher. He employs the calmness of that retreat in contemplating the divine perfections; or rather, in this delicious retirement it was, that he enjoyed the intimate communications of the Almighty, who inspired him, and appointed him to the high destination of laying the first foundations of revealed religion, which was to supply the defects of that of nature, already clouded and disfigured by the prejudices and the passions of mankind. He composed the book of Genesis; and thereby furnished the world with irresistible arms to combat idolatry. He attacks the two most extravagant errors into which the human race had fallen, the plurality of gods, and that which admits imperfection in the Deity. To the one, and the other, he opposes the doctrine of the unity of an all-perfect Being.

“That GOD, whose existence and attributes he thus published, was pleased to manifest himself to him in mount Horeb, in a manner altogether singular and miraculous. He confers on this chosen servant, the glorious but formidable commission, to take the field against Pharaoh, to stem the current of oppression, to attempt to mollify the tyrant; and, if persuasion failed, to employ force, to support arguments by prodigies, to exact from all Egypt the expiation of those barbarities which she had dared to exercise upon a people distinguished as the object of his tenderest love, and of his most illustrious miracles.

“This appointment Moses presumes to decline; but from a spirit of humility rather than of disobedience. He could not conceive it possible that, at the age of fourscore, and labouring under a defect of speech, he could be the person qualified to address a mighty prince, and overturn a whole kingdom. The appointment is a second time pressed upon him; a second

time he refuses it. At length, however, his reluctance is overcome; and filled with that spirit which animated him to the conflict, he enters on the career of glory which was presented to him, and his first victory is a victory over himself. He tears himself from the delights of the land of Midian; he quits the house of a father-in-law, by whom he was most tenderly beloved, to encounter a host of enemies and executioners.

“ He arrives in Egypt. He presents himself before Pharaoh: he entreats; he threatens: he draws down upon the Egyptians plagues the most tremendous. He departs from that kingdom, at the head of a people which had endured in it cruelties the most unexampled. The tyrant pursues him, gains ground, presses hard upon him. Behold him encompassed on every side, by a vast and invincible army, by a ridge of inaccessible mountains, and by the waters of the Red Sea. He rebukes the roaring billows: they instantly become obedient to the man whom the DEITY has made (if the expression be lawful) the depository of his power. *The waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left*, Exod. xiv. 29, as the sacred historian expresses himself. Moses advances into the wilderness, and, by a continuation of miraculous interposition, he beholds those very waters which had divided, to favour the passage of Israel, closing again, and swallowing up Pharaoh, his court, and his host.

“ Delivered, in appearance, from his most formidable enemies, he soon finds he has to maintain a lasting conflict with foes still more formidable, the very people whom he conducted. He discovers in these degenerate sons of Israel, every mean and grovelling sentiment which a servile state has a tendency to inspire; all the absurdity of weak and capricious minds; all the cowardice, perfidy, and ingratitude of corrupted hearts. With such a race Moses found himself under the necessity of living in a waste and parched desert, that of struggling there with all the horrors of hunger and thirst, and

a total want of every necessary. Exposed to all the insults of an enraged, ungovernable multitude, he is at the same time constrained to act as their intercessor with an offended God. He feels himself called upon to maintain the interests of the divine glory with a stiff-necked and perverse nation; and to plead the cause of that very nation with Deity, provoked to execute righteous judgment on a race of men who were continually disposed to insult his authority, and to degrade his perfections, by associating him with the infamous idols of the Pagan world.

“Moses had sometimes the felicity of averting the divine displeasure, and of restraining the madness of the people. But more frequently he endured the mortification of seeing the inefficacy of all his well-meant efforts. The violence of the people bore down all opposition; and offended Heaven turned a deaf ear to the voice of his supplication. Divine justice vindicated its rights; Israel felt its severest strokes, and *twenty-four thousand*, Numb. xxv. 9, fell at one stroke.

“The most awful chastisements have proved equally ineffectual with the tenderest expostulations, to bring them back to a sense of their duty. And as if Moses had been responsible for the calamities which they had brought upon themselves, by their reiterated crimes, they talk of stoning him. They propose to appoint a commander to conduct them back to Egypt, from whence God had delivered them by *a strong hand and a stretched-out arm*: they prefer an inglorious servitude to the miraculous protection afforded them in the wilderness, and to all the prospects of the fair inheritance which God had promised to bestow upon them.

“In a state of such anxiety and distress Moses passed forty complete years, and conducted, at length, the remains of this people to the borders of the promised land. Was ever life so singularly eventful? Was ever hero signalized by so many extraordinary exploits?

“If we go into a more particular detail of his great actions, we meet with a bright display of every shining virtue.

“What magnanimity! Witness the armies he so successfully commanded; witness the crown and kingdom of Egypt despised, rejected, when put in competition with the obligations and prospects of religion.

“What firmness! Witness his undaunted addresses, and his animated replies to Pharaoh. *Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me*, Exod. viii. 1. *We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; there shall not be an hoof left behind. Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more*, Exod. x. 9, 26, 29.

“What fervour! Witness these hands lifted up to heaven, while Israel was fighting against Amalek. Witness these ardent prayers in behalf of the rebellious Israelites: *Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever*, Exod. xxxii. 11—13.

“What charity! Witness these forcible expressions: *Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin: and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written*, Exod. xxxii. 31, 32.

“What gentleness! Witness what is said of him, Numbers xii. 3. *Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.*

“What earnest desire to draw supplies of grace and truth immediately from their source! Witness these

ardent aspirations of soul after God: *If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. I beseech thee, show me thy glory*, Exod. xxxiii. 15—18.

“What zeal for the glory of God! Witness the tables of the law broken in pieces at the sight of a people who had rendered themselves unworthy of receiving marks so tender of the love of God. Witness that rigorous order issued to the sons of Levi: *Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour*, Exod. xxxii. 27. Witness his answer to Joshua, when he expressed an apprehension lest the prophetic gifts bestowed on Eldad and Medad should eclipse the glory of his master: *Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them*, Numb. xi. 29.

“What perseverance! Witness those exhortations; and that sacred song, with which he concluded his ministrations and his life.

“But where was perfect virtue ever to be found? Moses too had his infirmities. In a life so long, however, and so peculiarly circumstanced, who is chargeable with faults so slight and so few? His very errors seem to partake of the nature of virtue. The darker shades of his character become perceptible from the contrast they form with a whole life so bright and luminous. That he should shrink back, at first, from the proposal of an embassy to the king of Egypt; that he should neglect, for a season, from certain domestic considerations, the circumcision of a child; that he should be slow of belief respecting the disposition of a righteous God to extract water miraculously from the rock, to supply the wants of a murmuring generation; that he should strike the rock a second time, rather from indignation against the rebels, than from distrust of the God in whom compassions flow—

These undoubtedly are blemishes, nay, offences which God might punish with death, were he strict to mark iniquity; but, when human infirmity is taken into the account, they are faults that excite pity rather than indignation.

“Should any part of the eulogium we have pronounced on Moses seem exaggerated, we shall add, to all the honourable traits under which we have represented him, one infinitely more glorious still, traced by the hand of God himself, who best knows how to appreciate merit and distribute praise, and which exalts our prophet far above all human panegyric: *There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel.*”

This truly great man died in the year of the world two thousand five hundred and fifty-three; and before the birth of Jesus Christ one thousand four hundred and fifty-one; eight hundred and ninety-seven years after the flood; and before the building of Solomon's temple four hundred and forty; in the fortieth year from the Exodus, or departure of Israel from Egypt; and of his own age the one hundred and twentieth. Before his death, he uttered a clear and distinct prediction of the Messiah, which, in “the fulness of time,” was exactly accomplished; and he appeared in person on mount Tabor to lay all his glory and honour at the feet of the Saviour of the world. We shall have finished our plan, after we have suggested a few reflections on this prediction of Moses, and on this his appearance, in company with Elias, to do homage to the Son of God—“the Author and Finisher of our faith.” To Him “be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE XIII.

The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me: unto him ye shall hearken. According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee. and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.—DEUT. xviii. 15—18. ACTS iii. 22.

IN the frame and course of nature, who does not perceive evident marks of wisdom in design, order in execution, energy in operation? All is plan, system, harmony. Every thing bespeaks a Being provident, omnipotent, unremittingly attentive: whose works, indeed, infinitely exceed our comprehension; but which by their beauty, simplicity and usefulness, fill the mind with wonder and delight, while their variety, lustre, magnificence and immensity astonish and over-

whelm. The government of the world, it is equally evident, is the result of contrivance; it evinces a constant, superintending care. Event arises out of event, link runs into link. What to the first glance appeared an assemblage of scattered fragments, is found, on a more careful and attentive inspection, to be a regular, beautiful, well proportioned fabric, a "body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part."

It must be pleasing to every serious mind to observe in the work of redemption a similar uniformity of design, progress and execution. We find patriarchs, prophets, apostles, remote from, unknown to one another, at different ages, in different regions, declaring the same purpose, promoting the same plan, aiming at the same end. This affords a presumption, at least, that he who made, upholds and governs the universe, is likewise the Author of salvation; in all whose works and ways a noble and important end is obviously kept in view; and that end pursued and attained by means the wisest and the best. The Mosaic and Christian are not separate, unconnected, independent dispensations, but corresponding and harmonious members of the same great building of God. Nature and grace have one source, one date; they proceed in a parallel direction, they are hastening to one common consummation. Or, to speak more properly, the system of external nature and the scheme of redemption are the well-adjusted, the harmonized parts of the one great plan of the eternal Providence, which contains the whole purpose of the glorious CREATOR concerning man—his first formation, his present state and character, and his final destination.

Turn up the inspired volume at whatever page you will, and you have a person, or an event, or a service, or a prediction unfolding, in one form or another, the merciful "purpose of Him who worketh all things

after the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory." Transport yourself in thought to whatever period of the world you will, and you still find the gospel preached; whether in the sacrifice of righteous Abel, the translation of Enoch, the ark of Noah, the promise made to Abraham, the predictions of dying Jacob; from the seat of Moses, the throne of David, the dungeon of Jeremiah. They all speak uniform language, all give witness to the same person, all disclose their own peculiar portion of the gospel treasure, for the illumination of an ignorant, the reformation of a corrupted, the salvation of a perishing world.

The writings of Moses exhibit a singular display of this grand combined plan. He traces nature up to her birth, and instructs us "how the heavens and earth rose out of chaos." He conducts us through the mazes of the moral government of the Great Supreme, and there too unfolds wild uproar reduced to order, and "the wrath of man working the righteousness of God." He draws aside the curtains of the night, and "the day-spring from on high" dawns on fallen humanity. He attends us through the morning of that bright day, and, constrained at length to retire, leaves behind him the assurance, that "the fulness of the time" would come, that "the morning light" would advance with growing splendour unto "the perfect day." He presents to our astonished eyes the vast, the complicated, the beautiful machine; wheel within wheel put in motion, preserving from age to age its steady majestic tenour, with native, unwearied, undiminished force; referring us still to its divine AUTHOR, who made and upholds all "by the word of his power," and for whose "pleasure they are and were created."

Moses, not only in what he wrote, but in what he was and acted, illustriously displayed the grace of God in the redemption of the world. Not only did he

write and *testify* concerning the great Deliverer, but his person, his character, his offices, were a prefiguration of "Him who was to come," and to whom "all the prophets give witness."

The prediction which has been read, and the pointed application made of it by the apostles to their divine Master, constitute the proof of what we have just advanced. Moses, under the direction of the spirit of prophecy, raises the expectation of mankind to the appearance of a prophet, like, indeed, but far superior to himself; and the apostles point with the finger to Jesus of Nazareth, saying, "We have found him of whom Moses, in the law, and the prophets did write."

A limited creature of threescore years and ten, is lost in the contemplation of a period of fifteen hundred and eleven years, for such was the distance of this prophecy from its accomplishment. The short-lived creature loses sight of it, feels his interest in it but small, is at little pains to transmit the knowledge of it to those who shall come after him; the next generation it is neglected, overlooked, forgotten; or, if observed and recollected, is misunderstood, misapplied. But during every instant of the extended period, the eternal eye has been watching over it; in solemn silence attending its progress, triumphing over both neglect and opposition; and a slumbering world is roused at length to see and to acknowledge the truth and faithfulness, the power, wisdom and grace of the Most High.

The day of Moses, then, in the eye of God, runs down to that of Christ; as his, in return, ascends to the earliest of the promises and predictions, illuminating, quickening, confirming; fulfilling all that is written. Placed at whatever point of the system of nature, whether on our own planet or on any other, to the north, or to the south; in summer or winter, the eye is still attracted to the common centre of all, the great

“Light of the world.” In like manner, at whatever distance we are placed, and in whatever direction we contemplate the system which redeeming love has framed, from under the shade of the tree of life in Eden, from the summit of Ararat, Moriah, or Pisgah, in the plain of Mamre, or from a pinnacle of the temple; with Abraham, viewing the Saviour and his day afar off, or with Simeon embracing him, the same “Sun of righteousness” shed his glory around us; we see the light, we feel the influence of him who quickeneth and enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world.

As we find Moses plainly and unequivocally referring men to Christ, so the Saviour as explicitly refers to Moses for a testimony concerning himself; thereby plainly insinuating, that if the Jewish prophet deserved any credit, possessed any respectability, this credit, this respectability were ministering servants to the dignity of his own person, the sacredness of his character, the divinity of his mission. And this is accompanied with a severe denunciation of judgment against such as admitted the authority of Moses, but rejected that of Christ; to introduce, recommend and confirm which was the end for which Moses was raised up. “Do not think I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?”

This reciprocal testimony, therefore, of the founders of the ancient and new economy, throws light on both, and communicates mutual credibility and importance. Moses satisfies himself with simply delivering the prediction which he had in charge; he forms no plan, enters into no argument to bring it into effect, but leaves to Providence the care of leading forward to the accomplishment, in the proper time and method. Christ simply points to what was written, and was generally

known, received and respected as a revelation from heaven, and requires to be believed and obeyed no farther than he bore the characters under which Moses had announced him; particularly that of “the great Prophet which should come into the world.”

—The proper character of a prophet is to communicate the special will of Heaven to men. God, indeed, writes his will on the mind of every man, as he comes into the world; interweaves it with the very constitution and frame of his being, so that, in truth, every man is a law, is a prophet to himself. But the characters are quickly erased, effaced; education, example, superstition, vicious propensities, obliterate the writing of God; habit and the commerce of the world harden the heart, and lull the conscience asleep, and “the hearts of men are set in them to do evil.” Hence the necessity of a prophet, of a messenger, of a minister from heaven, to republish the original law, to restore the obliterated characters, to call men back to God, from whom they have revolted.

And such an one was Moses; raised up of God at a period of singular darkness and depravity, divinely commissioned to promulgate the royal law. Not to settle a different, a novel constitution, not to new-model human nature, but to revive and enforce the primitive constitution, to proclaim in the ear what nature whispered from the beginning, to hang up the conspicuous tablet before the eye, whose contents are the exact counterpart of what the finger of God, in the very formation of man, engraved on “the living tables of the heart.” And when Christ came, the Prophet after his similitude, was it not in like manner to rebuild what was broken down, not to rear a totally different edifice? to magnify the law and make it honourable, to clear it from misinterpretation and perversion, to restore it to its native purity and simplicity, and to extract the spirit out of the letter? “Think not,” says he, “that I am come to destroy the law, or the pro-

phets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled," Matt. v. 17, 18. This confirms the observation we have been all along endeavouring to inculcate respecting the uniformity and perseverance of the divine procedure. Men start from purpose to purpose, from pursuit to pursuit; they lose sight, they tire of their object; they waste their strength, they are discouraged by opposition, they begin to build before they have counted the cost. But "known to God are all his works from the beginning." He forms his plan, and undeviatingly pursues it. "I am the Lord, I change not." He lays his foundation, and it standeth sure, and the building rises; "he willeth and none can let it." "God made man upright;" and to maintain or restore that uprightness is his great aim and end, under every dispensation of his providence under the law and the gospel, by Moses and by Christ.

—A prophet must have the necessary qualifications for his office, must be instructed in the mind of God, be filled with zeal for his glory, be animated with ardent love to mankind, be fortified against the assaults and opposition of ignorance, and prejudice, and envy. And such an one was Moses, "whom the Lord knew face to face," with whom he conversed as a man with his friend; his zeal was inextinguishable; for the good of Israel he was ready to make the sacrifice of self; his meekness was unruffled, his patience not to be subdued, his perseverance indefatigable, his resolution undaunted. How much more eminently conspicuous were these characters of a prophet, in the great "Author and Finisher of the christian faith?" The only begotten Son who is "in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him;" "the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." "The cup which my

Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?" "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Mat. iii. 17.

Moses conversed forty days with God, in the mount; but thus saith uncreated Wisdom, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old, I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning or ever the earth was;" "before Abraham was, I am." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men," John i. 1—4.

The spirit of Moses was sometimes stirred within him; he dashed the tables of the law to the ground, "he spake unadvisedly with his lips;" he incurred the displeasure of his heavenly Father, he drew down a sentence of just condemnation upon his head; but the spirit of the christian Leader was in no one instance discomposed. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips." He suffered indeed and died, but it was without a crime, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God." Moses expressed a willingness to be blotted out of God's book, to be deprived of his personal right as a son of Israel, provided Israel might receive the remission of sin, have their rights preserved, and the covenant of promise be confirmed. But Christ became "a curse for us," was "hanged on a tree," was "cut off from the land of the living," became "a propitiation for sin," "bare our sins in his own body on the tree," "became sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

—A prophet must exhibit the signs of his mission. Men will not believe him on his own report, will suspect him of attention to his own fame, or interest, or authority. To prove therefore that he came from God, that he speaks in his name, that he is vested with his

authority, he must do the works of God. And thus was Moses commissioned and permitted to prove his mission. By sign upon sign he demonstrated that the Lord had appeared unto him, and spake by him; earth and water and air bore their united testimony to his divine legation; and the most enlightened nation of the globe was made to feel his ascendant, by arguments addressed at once to the senses and the understanding. It is needful to say that the great Prophet, "Apostle and High-Priest of our profession," by similar means, by more irresistible evidence, evinced that he was "a teacher sent from God?" I shall say nothing respecting the greater number, variety and notoriety of Christ's miracles; though every one of these circumstances furnishes ample matter of discussion; I satisfy myself at present with mentioning two particulars which strikingly establish Christ's prophetic character, and give it a clear and decided superiority to that of Moses. The latter acted by a delegated authority, according to a prescribed form; he assumed nothing to himself, but was checked, reproved, condemned, the moment he presumed to arrogate independence, to speak or to act for himself. But Jesus Christ wrought miracles in his own name, by his own power, as the Lord of nature, as possessed of independent sovereignty. Again, the signs which Moses exhibited were of a mixed nature, they declared both the mercy and judgment of God, they poured down hail, and tempest, and pestilence on Egypt, as well as dropped manna on the tents of Israel; whereas the signs which Jesus adduced in support of his mission were all miracles of mercy; the powers of hell alone felt the rod of his anger; and the miracles by which he confirmed his doctrine breathed his meekness and gentleness and clarity.

"Of the things which have been spoken this is the sum; We have such an High-Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the hea-

vens. A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man," Heb. viii. 1, 2. "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house, hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over his own house: whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end," Heb. iii. 1—6. "We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" Heb. ii. 1—4. "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" Heb. x. 28, 29.

Having now, in the course of these exercises, through a series of years, endeavoured to trace the history of mankind, in a series of characters, from Adam to Moses, copied from the original portraits which the pencil of inspiration has itself vouchsafed

to delineate; the whole in general, and every one particular, referring themselves to one great ORIGINAL, from whom their meaning, use and importance are derived—I hasten to conclude my plan, by turning over to the gospel history, which exhibits that same Moses, whom we saw expire on mount Nebo, and “buried in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor;” whose dying benediction yet trembles on our ear, and whose funeral eulogy we attempted to sing, alive again on mount Tabor, and giving personal testimony and homage to him whom he prefigured and foretold. The history of Moses is not properly ended till then: and in vanishing from our sight on the mount of transfiguration, he becomes a glorious harbinger of the “life and immortality which are brought to light by the gospel.”

HISTORY OF MOSES.

LECTURE XIV.

And it came to pass, about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter, and John, and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering. And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias; who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter, and they that were with him, were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass, as they departed from him Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.
—LUKE ix. 28—35.

IN the narrowness of their conceptions and the presumptuousness of their pride, men are apt to consider themselves as the only, or at least, the chief inhabitants of the creation of God. A false patriotism, or rather a spirit of insolence and selfishness has gone farther, has ascribed the consequence of a whole universe to some insignificant little region or district of

this little globe, and has represented the men who breathe on such a spot, and converse in such a language, as the only persons who are worthy of consideration. We reflect not, what a speck our own country is, compared with the whole earth: what a point the earth is, compared to the vast solar system: and how the solar system itself is lost, in the contemplation of infinite space. We reflect not on the myriads of “just men made perfect,” from the death of “righteous Abel,” down to the expiring saint, whose disengaged spirit is just now on the wing to the bosom of his God; of those who, lost to us, yet live to their Creator. We reflect not on the myriads of, probably, more glorious beings, who people the greater and more glorious worlds which surround ours. We reflect not on the myriads of pure spirits who never left their first estate, that innumerable company of angels who “excel in strength,” “the least of whom could wield these elements.”

Sound reason and “the wisdom which is from above” correct our narrowness of thought and pride of heart; and teach us to say, in the words which our immortal bard puts in the mouth of Adam, first of men, addressed to his fair consort—

——“Nor think, though men were none,
That heaven would want spectators, God want praise:
Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth,
Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep;
All these with ceaseless praise his works behold,
Both day and night.”

If our ears were not dull and limited as our spirits—

——“How often, from the steep
Of echoing hill or thicket should we hear
Celestial voices to the midnight air,
Sole, or responsive each to other’s note,
Singing their great Creator! Oft in bands,
While they keep watch, or nightly rounding walk,
With heavenly touch of instrumental sounds,
In full harmonic number join’d, their songs
Divide the night, and lift our thoughts to heaven.”

We foolishly imagine the world of spirits to be at a vast distance, whereas in truth we are upon its very confines. We consider its inhabitants as entire strangers to us, whereas they are constantly about our path and our bed, attending our going out and coming in, our lying down and rising up. If our eyes were not held, we should even now behold them joining in and assisting our praises, rejoicing together, when, by the ministry of the word of divine grace, sinners are converted, and saints edified. Little did the three disciples think, when they ascended mount Tabor, that they were so near to an interview with Moses and Elias. Moses, and Elias, and Christ, are not far from us; it is our folly and infirmity to think ourselves far from them.

When we look back to the latter end of Moses, the man of God, we attend him up to mount Nebo, and behold him taking from Pisgah a last look and a last farewell of the glory of this world. We see his eyes closing in peace, and breathe a sigh over his tomb, and bid him a long farewell, and think we have lost him forever. But it is not an everlasting adieu. On Tabor we have found him again, after a lapse of fifteen centuries; we find not only his name, his memory, his writings, his predictions, his spirit, alive and in force, but his very person, still employed in ministering to the salvation of the Israel of God: and hence we look forward to the lapse of a few years more, at the expiration of which we hope to meet him indeed, not armed with that fiery law which condemns and consumes, but a minister and a fellow-partaker of that grace which redeems and saves.

We cannot consider ourselves therefore as having yet concluded the history of Moses, while that memorable event of it, which is the subject of this evening's reading, remains unconsidered; and as the evangelic page has exhibited him to us alive from the dead, let us devoutly attend to the reason and end of this glori-

ous apparition. It naturally suggests to us the following reflections:

I. That Jehovah is, with undeviating, undiverted, undivided attention, carrying on the great plan of his providence to full maturity, by every order of beings, in every possible state; by those who cheerfully enter into his views, and joyfully submit to his will; and by those who carelessly neglect or proudly oppose it. We have seen him serving himself of this Moses in the court of Pharaoh, in the pastures of Midian, in the wilderness of Sinai; as a prophet, as a legislator, as an historian. And, to fit him for a new field of action, behold him shining in a new and glorious form. The grave seems to have surrendered up its trust, heaven has yielded up one of its inhabitants, and Moses is now admitted into a land from which he was once shut out. In this world we have still to deplore faculties wasting, impairing, extinguished; usefulness interrupted, cut off in the midst, by the stroke of death, the earth impoverished by the premature departure of wisdom and worth. The history of mankind exhibits projects blasted, schemes abortive, instruments feeble and inadequate, concussions violent, revolutions sudden and unexpected; but far different the view which the scriptures represent of the kingdom of God in it, one generation passeth not away that another may succeed, but there is an eternal accumulation of citizens, eternally increasing in wisdom, goodness and felicity; faculties ever improving, projects advancing in full certainty of success, means fitted to their end, and the one great scheme of the Eternal Mind proceeding in steady, uniform majesty, to its final consummation. Pleasing, awful thought! "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations," Psal. xxxii. 11.

II. We observe, from this history, The benevolent interest which celestial beings take in the affairs of men. They are no unconcerned spectators of what

passes here below. They who have been raised from earth to heaven, have not lost all recollection of the world they have left, nor dropt all concern about their brethren in the flesh. Moses and Elias with joy revisit an inferior region, if thereby they can be instrumental in promoting the work of redemption; and exchange, for a season, the society of angels, and the delights of the paradise of God, for the company of simple fishermen, and a barren mountain's top, that we might have strong consolation in contemplating "the sufferings of Christ," and the glory that preceded and followed. O what an exalted, what a generous spirit does true religion breathe and inspire! It makes angels "ministering spirits to them who are the heirs of salvation;" it brings departed saints back to earth again; it converts Tabor into Heaven, and determines the choice of an apostle, when in a strait betwixt two, and to prefer abiding in the flesh, because more needful to his fellow-creatures, to the selfish joy, though far better, of departing and being with Christ. But Moses and Elias and Paul were themselves men, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, were instructed by sympathy to commiserate, and prompted by affection to relieve, human wretchedness. Behold an infinitely greater miracle of generous, disinterested love; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. Jesus "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen," Rev. i. 5, 6. "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Heb. ii. 16. "As children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them

who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage," Heb. ii. 14, 15.

III. The history before us suggests, The sweet harmony, the perfect intelligence which subsists between glorified spirits. Moses and Elias, as they co-operated in the same design, though at different periods upon earth, much more concur in sentiment, in exertion, now they see more clearly and comprehend more fully the intentions of a wise and gracious Providence. Through ignorance, through pride, through jealousy, through malice, imperfect men on earth will differ, will hate and oppose each other; but in celestial bosoms the dark, malignant, unsocial passions find no place: in them there ever prevails unity of intelligence, unity of design, unity in operation, unity of affection. Prompted by the same motive, aiming at the same end, Gabriel, a multitude of the heavenly host, Moses and Elias—angels single, and in bands, announce to the world the advent of the Saviour, celebrate his birth, witness his transfiguration, relieve his agony, record his death, declare his resurrection from the dead, grace his ascent to heaven, proclaim his second coming. And O what must be that harmony and joy! the harmony and joy of heaven, where angels and archangels, the cherubim and the seraphim, patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and the whole multitude of the redeemed, animated by one spirit, adore the same object, rejoice in the same grace wherein they stand, and join in the same triumphant song!

Connect with this, the idea of the quick and perfect intelligence which subsists between the children of this kingdom. The happiness of heaven is a social, not a solitary joy. But how can the poverty of our imagination, the coldness of our affections, conceive the intimacy of intercourse, the promptness of communication, the sympathy of feeling, in pure spirits wholly disposed to love, and free from all desire or design to disguise, to deceive, to conceal!

“Where friendship full exerts her softest power,
Perfect esteem enliven’d by desire
Ineffable, and sympathy of soul,
Thought meeting thought, and will preventing will,
With boundless confidence.”— THOMSON.

With what promptitude and intelligence celestial beings converse, say, ye gentle spirits, who know what it is to soothe and relieve the lazy lingering hours of absence by the friendly aid of letters; ye, whom the murmur of a sigh, or the tone of a single word can instantly instruct; ye, whose hearts the pressure of a finger can awake to rapture; ye, whose kindred, congenial souls the slightest glance of the impassioned eye, can, in a moment, quick as the lightening’s flash, penetrate, kindle, inform, assimilate;—

——“Ye whom the sudden tear
Surprises often when you look around,
And nothing strikes your eye but sights of bliss.”
THOMSON.

But the purest human affection is ever dashed with doubt, with apprehension, with suspicion; its communications are liable to be retarded by dulness, prevented by accident, or checked and blasted by a malignant eye, and therefore can at best convey but an imperfect idea of that “perfect love which casteth out fear,” of that divine sympathy which speeds the holy intercourse from soul to soul, of that mutual understanding which needs not the medium of sense to convey it.—

Though we cannot conceive, much less describe, in what manner angels and saints in bliss converse one with another, yet from the text we know, what is the *one, great, darling* theme of their conversation, Moses and Elias descend from their heavenly thrones, from before the fountain of light and life, appear in glory, revisit the earth, associate with men, to do homage at the feet of Jesus, and to “speak of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” This leads to a

IVth, and the most important remark on this passage of our Saviour's history, in connection with that of Moses, namely, That under every dispensation, before the giving of the law, and under its reign, when it was restored, and after it is abolished; to righteous men on earth, to just men made perfect, to the angels of God: in the eye of God himself—there is one object of peculiar magnitude and importance, which is before all, above all, runs through all, and in which all shall finally terminate. It is surely not without a meaning, that the promises, the predictions, from first to last, point out a Saviour that should suffer and die; that all the types, services, sacrifices of the law should represent a salvation that was to be wrought out, to be purchased with blood; that the whole doctrine of the gospel should be compressed into one point, the doctrine of the *Cross*; that the throne of God eternal in the heavens should exhibit at its right hand, and in the midst of it, “a Lamb as it had been slain;” that the song of the redeemed should celebrate Him who loved the sons of men, and “washed them from their sins in his blood!” O the infatuation of a careless, unbelieving world! that subject which the ransomed of the Lord dwell upon with ever new and increasing delight; that great “mystery of godliness,” which “angels desire to look into;” that object which the great God has marked with special precision as his own; the wonder of heaven, the joy of the earth, the theme of eternity, was “to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness;” is to a faithless and perverse generation a thing of nought, the song of the drunkard, the jest of fools! If that blood has fallen and lies with such oppressive weight, both as a temporal and a spiritual curse on those who rashly imprecated it on themselves and their children, and then impiously and remorselessly shed it; “of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God,

and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" Heb. x. 29. May that blood be upon us, and upon our children, to cleanse, not to condemn, to exalt, not to overwhelm us, and be it our determinate resolution, through the grace that is in Christ to know nothing in comparison of Christ Jesus and him crucified, "and to glory in nothing but his cross."

V. Observe, the superiority ascribed, by a voice from the most excellent glory, to Christ the Lord, swallowing up and eclipsing all created excellency and perfection. "This is my beloved Son, hear him," Luke ix. 35, proclaims the voice, and instantly Moses and Elias disappear, that Jesus may be all in all. They have brought their glory and honour and laid it at his feet; they have pointed out to mankind in whose light they shine, in what consists their chief eminence and distinction. They in effect say the same thing with John the Baptist; "He that cometh after me is preferred before me, whose shoes' latchet I am not worthy to unloose," John i. 27. "Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," John i. 29. They forbid us to look toward them, or to trust in them for salvation. Having given this testimony to their Lord and ours, they retire to that world of bliss into which they found admission through that blood which cleanseth from all sin, through that decease which Christ was ready "to accomplish at Jerusalem." Let us joyfully bend the knee to Him, who, "for the suffering of death is crowned with glory and honour, and has obtained a name that is above every name;" whom Moses and Elias acknowledge as their greater; whom all the angels of God are commanded to worship, as "the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature," "by whom were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principal-

ities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him," Col. i. 16.

Finally, The passage exhibits to our wondering eyes a glimpse of that glory which all the faithful shall finally attain; in the person of one who had never tasted death; whose body, by a miracle of almighty power, was fitted for heaven and immortality without seeing corruption in the grave; and of one, who, as we must, died and was buried, and by a similar miracle, was either ransomed from the power of the grave, or whose glorified spirit was fitted with a temporary vehicle of transparent flesh for the present grand occasion; but above all, in the person of the greatest of the three, who was pleased to clothe humanity, which had not yet, but soon was to suffer death, with a transitory glory, the forerunner of that which should quickly follow, and do away all the ignominy of the tomb, and become the sure pledge of that glory with which he shall invest all them that believe, after "the fashion of his own glorious body." While we contemplate mount Tabor, the immortal spirit looks through the frail tottering fabric of flesh and blood, in which it is inclosed; and while, from its present connection, it surveys with concern the inroads of disease, the waters of time, the approaches of dissolution; from the visions of God, from the power of free sovereign grace, from the present attainments of the faithful, beholds with rapture the splendor of that vehicle in which it shall ascend "to meet the Lord in the air," when "mortality shall be swallowed up of life; when it shall be united to a body insusceptible of pain, undepressed by his own gravity, unfettered by the laws of dull matter, uncondemned to mortality. Glorious and blessed day when the meanest of the saints shall resemble Moses, not in that green and lively old age which experienced not dimness of eyes, nor abatement of natural vigour, but in that renovated youth, that unfading beauty, that impassive strength, that immor-

tal lustre, wherein on the mount of the Lord he was seen; and shall resemble Elias, not by mounting with the help of a chariot of fire and horses of fire into heaven, but with native force, immediately derived from the great Source of life and motion, shall spontaneously ascend up to his native seat; shall resemble Christ, his divine head, not in that sinless infirmity to which he voluntarily submitted in the days of his flesh, but in that glory which he had with the Father before the world was, and which for a moment burst forth on the mount of transfiguration, when "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." Glorious and blessed gospel! which first taught the resurrection from the dead, which has "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light; whose "exceeding great and precious promises" make men "partakers of a divine nature;" whose hallowed page represent saints and angels quitting their heavenly abode to minister to the necessities of wretched mortals; and wretched mortals rising to the everlasting possession of heavenly thrones. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. xv. 57.

But now the curtain is dropt, Moses and Elias have resumed their places in heaven, and the glory of Tabor is no more. Yet, though unseen, they cease not to instruct us. Though withdrawn, they are in the midst of us still; the distinction of past and future they feel no longer, and separation by space cannot keep celestial beings asunder. Providence brought together into one place the giver and restorer of the law; and the first harbingers of the gospel blending earth and heaven together in homage to the Son of God. And all distance between them too is now for ever done away. Remote as we are, we behold them together in a state of glorious perfection, but permitted to converse with us no more. But He is with us still, their Lord and

ours; his voice we can still hear, after they are silenced, and Him we are commanded to hear. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever;" "To Him all the prophets give witness," and he is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

And thus have we finished our proposed delineation of the lives of the patriarchs, from Adam, the father of the human race, down to Moses, the great legislator and prophet of the Hebrew nation; with the intermediate illustrious personages, whom the Spirit of God has preserved from oblivion, for our information and use; whom Providence raised up in the earlier ages of the world to occupy distinguished stations, and to accomplish important designs; who, by their respective characters, offices and declarations, predicted or prefigured the Messiah; who edified the world, while they lived, by their doctrine and example; and who, being dead, continue living monitors and instructors of mankind.

While we contemplate the progress of these venerable figures along the plain of existence, we feel ourselves in motion, we are hurrying down the stream, we begin to mingle with the assembly of the departed, we leave our place among men empty. Of those who entered with us on this career of meditation, "some are not;" their course is finished, they have fulfilled their day, they are gone to join the men who lived beyond the flood. The cold hand of death has frozen up some of the streams of friendship; the congelation is gaining upon our own vital powers, and marking us for the tomb, where the endearments of social affection, and the meltings of sympathy, and the glow of love, are felt no more. But "we sorrow not" over departed worth "as those who have no hope." God and angels, and "the spirits of just men made perfect," have gained what the world has lost: they move in a higher sphere; they perceive

with purer intelligence, act with superior energy, enjoy with more exalted capacity; they die no more, they are as the angels of God in heaven: and Providence charges itself with the care of the forsaken, the helpless and the forlorn whom they have left behind. And we look forward together to that day, when we shall join Moses and Elias, Peter and James and John, and all who have died before us, or shall die after us in the Lord, not in the glory of Tabor, which was to pass away, but of mount Zion which is above, and which endureth to endless ages—when we shall come together “unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel,” Heb. xii. 22—24, and dwell in a tabernacle not erected by the hands of man, the habitation of an hour, but in “a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Be ye therefore “followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Purchase for yourselves a deathless name among the “ransomed of the Lord.” Consider yourselves as encompassed, observed, tenderly regarded by those to whom you were dear while they tabernacled among men, and who now love you with the ardour of immortals. Add to the consolation which they enjoy, that of marking your progress in wisdom, your growth in grace. Cultivate acquaintance with the language you are to speak, the spirit you are to breathe, the manners with which you are to conform, the persons with whom you are to converse, eternally. “Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race

that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God," Heb. xii. 1, 2. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure," 1 John iii. 2, 3.

END OF THE FIRST COURSE OF LECTURES.

SACRED BIOGRAPHY.

BY HENRY HUNTER, D. D.

SECOND COURSE OF LECTURES.

SACRED BIOGRAPHY.

LECTURE I.

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him.—GEN. ii. 18.

THE holy scriptures always exhibit the most simple and the justest view of every subject which they treat. And what subject of importance to man do they not treat? The God who made us what we are, formed man after a model, destined him for a special situation, and to fulfil a specific purpose. His faculties, his relations, his duties, his demands, his delights, were all, from the beginning, present to the eye of his Creator; and corresponding arrangement and provision were made by Him, who seeth the end from the commencement, and who exactly adjusts all, according to number, weight, and measure.

The perfection of the works of God, is a beautiful and gradual progress toward perfection: from inanimate to vegetative, from vegetative to animal, from animal to rational nature; each approaching to, bordering upon each, but every one circumscribed by a boundary which it cannot pass, to disturb and confound the province of another. The scale of being, as to this globe, was complete when God had “created man in his own image.” But social existence was not perfect till it pleased God to draw man out of solitude, by making him “an help meet for him.” This simply, yet clearly,

unfolds woman's nature, station, duty, use and end. This raises her to her *proper* rank and importance, and instructs her how most effectually to support them; this forbids her to aspire after rule, for her Maker designed her as "an helper;" this secures for her affection and respect, for how is it possible to hate or despise what God and nature have rendered essential to our happiness? If the intention of the Creator, therefore, is attended to, the respective claims and duties of the sexes are settled in a moment, and an end is put to all unprofitable discussion of superiority and inferiority, of authority and subjection, in those whose destination, and whose duty it is, to be mutually helpful, attentive and affectionate.

The female character and conduct have frequently presented themselves in the course of the history of the Patriarchs. And indeed how can the life of man be separated from that of woman? their amiable qualities and praise-worthy actions have been occasionally pointed out, and unreservedly, though without adulation, commended: their faults and follies have been, with equal freedom, exposed and censured. But in the instances referred to, female conduct has undergone only an accidental and transient review, in detached fragments, and as supplementary to, or producing influence on, the conduct of man. The pencil of inspiration, however, having introduced persons of the gentler sex into its inimitable compositions; and these not always thrown into the back-ground or placed in the shade, but sometimes springing forward into the light, and glowing in all the brilliancy of colouring, I have been induced, with trembling steps, to follow the heavenly guide; and to follow up the fainter sketches of a Sarah, a Rebekah, a Rachel, a Miriam, with the more finished portraits "of Deborah, the wife of Lapidoth," "Ruth the Moabitess," and "Hannah," the mother of Samuel the prophet. In order to introduce these with greater advantage, I

mean to employ the present Lecture, in giving a general delineation of the female character, as it is represented in the passage now read, and as being the purpose and act of the great Lord of nature, "an help meet for man." Every creature was intended to yield help to man; the flower, with its beauty and fragrance; the tree, with its nutritious fruit; the animal tribes, with all their powers of ministering satisfaction to the senses or to the mind. Adam surveyed them all with delight, saw their several characters in their several forms, gave them names, observed and glorified his Creator's perfections displayed in himself, and in them. But still he was alone amidst all this multitude; the understanding was employed, but the heart wanted its object; the tongue could name all that the eye beheld, but there was no tender, sympathetic ear, to which it could say, "how fair, how lovely, how glorious is all this that we behold!" "For Adam there was not found an help meet for him." The want of nature is no sooner perceived by the great Parent of man, than it is supplied; the wish of reason is no sooner expressed than gratified. Paternal care and tenderness even outrun and prevent the calls of filial necessity. Adam has felt no void, uttered no complaint, but "The Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him." And with God, execution certainly and instantaneously follows design. "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh," Verse 21—24. How completely suitable an helper God provided for man in a state of sinless

perfection transcends imagination, much more description; all that is lovely in form, all that is graceful in manner, all that is exalted in mind, all that is pure in thought, all that is delicate in sentiment, all that is enchanting in conversation. This felicity was made subject to alteration; this harmony was not to continue perfect; but the original intention of the Creator was not to be defeated, no, but even in a state of degradation, difficulty and distress, as in a state of purity and peace, it was still the destination of Providence, that woman should be "an help meet" for man. In what important respects we are now to inquire.

The first and most obvious is, as his counsellor and coadjutor in bringing up their common offspring. Education, on the part of the mother, commences from the moment she has the prospect of being a mother; and the care of her own health is, thenceforth, the first duty which she owes to her child.* From that moment too she becomes in a peculiar sense "an help meet" for man, as being the depositary and guardian of their most precious joint concern. How greatly is her value now enhanced! Her existence is multiplied, her duration is extended. A man-child is at length born into the world; and what helper so *meet* for the glad father in rearing the tender babe, as the

* The instructions given to the wife of Manoah, and mother of Sampson the Nazarite (Jud. xiii. 4.) "Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine, nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing," are not merely arbitrary injunctions, adapted to a particular branch of political economy, and intended to serve local and temporary purposes; no, they are constitutions of nature, reason, and experience, which unite in recommending, to those who have the prospect of being mothers, a strict attention to diet, to exercise, to temper, to every thing which, affecting the frame of their own body or mind, may communicate an important, a lasting, perhaps indelible impression to the body or mind of their offspring. A proper regimen for themselves is, therefore, the first stage of education for their children. The neglect of it is frequently found productive of effects which no future culture is able to alter or rectify.

the mother who bare him. There are offices which she, and only she, can perform; there are affections which she, and only she, can feel; there are difficulties which she, and only she, can surmount. Nature has here so happily blended the duty with the recompense, that they cannot be distinguished or separated. In performing every act of maternal tenderness, while she tends and nourishes the body of her infant, she is gradually and insensibly forming his mind. His very first expressions of look, voice and gesture, are expressions of the important lessons which his mother has already taught him, attachment, gratitude, a sense of obligation and dependence. Hitherto she is the sole instructor, and “a stranger intermeddled not with her joy.” The dawning of reason appears; the solicitude of a father awakes; what a task is imposed upon him! Who is sufficient for it? But he is not left to perform it alone. The Lord God has provided him “an help meet for him,” one prompted by duty, drawn by affection, trained by experience, to assist him in the

Delightful task! To rear the tender thought;
To teach the young idea how to shoot.
To pour the fresh instruction o’er the mind,
To breathe th’ enlivening spirit, and to fix
The generous purpose in the glowing breast.

THOMSON.

In the more advanced stages of education, after the pupil is removed from under the maternal wing, of what assistance to the father, of what importance to the child, are the delicate ideas, and the tender counsels of a wise and virtuous woman! Read “the words of king Lemuel, the prophecy which his mother taught him,” Prov. xxxi. 1—9, and judge whether a mother may be an useful “help” in instructing a son, a grown son, and that son a prince. In truth, the mother’s influence over the child, as it begins earlier,

so it is of much longer duration than the father's. The son, having become a man, or approaching to that state, begins to feel uneasy under the restraints of paternal authority; he longs to shake the yoke from off his neck; he pants for independence—he must obtain it. But what ingenuous young man ever felt a mother's yoke galling, or longed for emancipation from the silken fetters in which her gentle fingers had entangled his soul? In the perfection of understanding, in the plenitude of power, in the self gratulation of independence, to her milder reason he still submits, her unassuming sway he readily acknowledges, and, independent of all things else, he feels he cannot do without the smiles of maternal approbation, the admonitions of maternal solicitude, the reproofs of maternal tenderness and integrity.

Whatever be the dispositions, whatever the faculties of the child, whether earlier or later in life, the business neither of father nor masters can proceed wisely and well without the co-operation of the mother. Who knows so well as she, the road to the understanding, the road to the heart? Who has skill like her to encourage the timid and repress the bold? Who has power and address like a mother's to subdue the stubborn and confirm the irresolute? Who can with such exquisite art draw out, put in motion, and direct ordinary or superior powers; place goodness in its fairest and most attractive light, and expose vice in its most hideous and forbidding form? In the case of those persons who have unhappily grossly deviated from the path of virtue, how many have been stopped, converted, brought back, by considerations of maternal feelings—shame, and sorrow, and regret; and by the recollection of early lessons, and principles, and resolutions. Having been “trained up, when a child, in the way wherein he should walk,” the man calls it to remembrance in old age, approves it, returns to it, and “departs from it” no more.

In educating the children of her own sex, the mother seems to be more than “an help meet” for man. The trust chiefly, if not entirely, devolves on her: and where could it be deposited so well? The knowledge she has of herself, experience of the world, and maternal affection, are all she needs to qualify her for this arduous undertaking. A mother only can enter into the feelings, and weaknesses, and necessities of a young female, entering on an unknown, varying, tempestuous, dangerous ocean; for she remembers how she herself felt and feared, what she needed, and how she was relieved, and assisted, and carried through. And to a mother only can a young female impart the numberless, nameless anxieties which every step she takes in life necessarily excite. When she converses with her mother, it is only thinking aloud. A mother’s conduct is the loveliest pattern of virtue, and the hope of a mother’s applause is, next to God’s, the most powerful motive to imitate it. The superiority of female to male youth in respect of moral, whatever be the case as to intellectual improvement, is clearly deducible from the larger share which the mother has in the education of the one, than of the other. And the more liberal and enlarged spirit of the times we live in, procuring for the female world a more liberal and rational education, is daily evincing to what an equality of intellectual endowment they are capable of rising, and thereby of, in all respects, fulfilling the design of the Creator, who said in the beginning, “I will make for man an help meet for him.”

I now proceed to mention a second most important respect, in which it is the obvious intention of Providence that woman should be “an help meet” for man, namely, the care and management of his wordly estate.

In a paradisaical state man *did* not, and in what is improperly called, the state of nature, he *could* not long continue. In the former, there was labour, imposed not as a burden or a punishment, but bestowed

as a privilege and a source of delight. The help of woman enhanced the value of that privilege, and improved that delight: and even in paradise, the attention of Eve to the disposal of the fruits of his labour, must have been to the man, an exquisite accession to the pleasure of enjoying them. The arrangement which her taste and care had made constituted the charm of the repast. In a state of uncultivated nature, the subsistence of the day is man's object. He has no idea of "much goods, laid up for many years." But the society and assistance of his rude companion are necessary to give a relish to "what he took in hunting;" and "the burden and heat of the day," he cheerfully encounters, in the prospect of the refreshment and repose of the evening; and even the hut in the desert exhibits the accomplishment of the Creator's purpose, woman "an help meet" for man, managing his scanty portion with discretion, and doubling it by participation.

As the state of society advanced, new ideas of property must have been produced. The labour of to-day began to look forward; "to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow." The care of posterity arose. Permanency must be given to possession. The earth and its produce are parcelled out, men "call their lands by their names," "house is joined to house, and field added to field." But could man do this alone? No. In vain have his labour and skill provided "bread enough, *and to spare*," unless the woman's prudent attention manage that sufficiency, and lay up that surplus, for the evil day which may come. No man ever prospered in the world, without the consent and co-operation of his wife. Let *him* be ever so frugal, regular, industrious, intelligent, successful—all goes for nothing, if *she* is profuse, disorderly, indolent, or unfaithful to her trust. *His* farm prospers, his barn is filled with plenty, "the floors are full of wheat, the vats overflow with wine and oil," his cattle increase, he is waxing rich. His neighbour's commerce thrives, his

plans were well laid; Providence smiles; the wings of every wind are wafting to his door gold, and silver, and precious things. The talents of a third are procuring for him reputation, and distinction, and honour, and wealth. How came they all to fail? Who opened the door, and let poverty rush in as an armed man? The thing speaks for itself. The design of Heaven is defeated; the parties were “unequally yoked;” the “help” found for these men, was not “an help *meet*” for them. Skill, was counteracted by carelessness; the fruits of diligence were scattered about by the hand of dissipation; the labours of a year perished in the sitting of an evening; “by much slothfulness the building decayed, and through idleness of the hands, the house dropped through.”

But “O how good a thing it is, and how pleasant,” when the gracious intentions of God and nature are fulfilled! With what spirit and perseverance does a man labour in his vocation, when he knows that his earnings will be faithfully disposed, and carefully improved! With what confidence will he resort to his farm, to his merchandize, fly over land, over the seas, meet difficulty, meet danger, if he has the assurance, that he is not spending his time and strength for nought and in vain; that all is well and safe at home; that indulgent Heaven has crowned all his other blessings, with that of “an help meet for him,” a discreet manager of his estate, a fellow-labourer with him, from interest, from affection, from a sense of duty, in “doing justly,” in seconding the goodness of divine Providence, in making fair provision for the time to come, in “providing things honest in the sight of all men!” I conclude this branch of my subject, with a portrait drawn by the pencil of inspiration; may Heaven propagate the resemblance.

“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She

will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchant's ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates," Prov. xxxi. 10—31.

A third respect in which God intended that woman should be "an help meet" for man, is the care of his health, and every thing connected with it; his tranquillity of mind, his temper, his character and reputation: without which the greatest bodily vigour will quickly decay and sink, and life will cease to be a blessing.

It is pleasant to have a companion in solitude, an assistant in labour, a fellow partaker in joy. But human life contains varieties painful, as well as pleasant. Sorrow, and pain, and solicitude, and disappointment, enter into the history of man: and he is but half-provided for the voyage of life, who has found an associate for his happier days only; while for his months of darkness and distress no sympathizing partner is prepared, no "help meet" is found. The provident care of the Almighty meets every wish and want of man; and in bestowing upon him a companion for youth, a sharer in felicity, a partner in property, he was securing for him, at a distance, a friend in age, a solace in affliction, a partner in want—"a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

If a man's worldly estate, whether it be much or little, is wisely managed, one foundation of health and comfort is laid; and she who is thus habitually employed, may be considered as administering a perpetual medicine or cordial to her husband. But no prudence or foresight can ward off the attack of disease, or prevent the stroke of calamity; affluence cannot purchase release from pain, nor tenderness cool the fever in the blood. But the sufferer is not left destitute. There is one ear into which he can pour out all his heart; there is one hand ever ready to relieve him; "one life bound up in his life." And as enjoyment derives all its relish from participation, so misery loses all its anguish in the bosom of sympathy and kindness. The spirit of penitence is inferior only to unsullied innocence; and next to the blessing of unimpaired health, and uninterrupted comfort, is the consolation of sickness alleviated, and comfort restored, by the gentle language and engaging offices of love. What shall I say? Is there not, perhaps, in the restoration of repenting guilt, and in the suspension of wo, by the assiduity of affection, a peculiar satisfaction, and a de-

light, which perfect innocence and perfect health could not possibly have known?

The regular temperature of a man's *body* is, however, only one ingredient in the cup of health. "An help meet for him" will be anxious to preserve a sound *mind* in a sound body; will endeavour to prevent or to dispel painful reflection; will remove disquieting objects; will present smiling images; will watch the ebbing and flowing of passion, will bear and forbear, and, like the best of beings, "will overcome evil with good."

She will likewise consider herself as entrusted with the care of his good name. *His* reputation is *her* brightest ornament; his honour is her joy, and crown of rejoicing. If he is disgraced, she is degraded. Every instance of misconduct in her, she knows, glances at him; and therefore to support his dignity is a powerful motive with her to act wisely and well. She reflects, that not only by gross deviations from duty in the wife, does the husband suffer in character, but that levity, indiscretion, carelessness in her, are an imputation upon his understanding, and, in the opinion of the world, incessantly upbraid him with the choice he has made, of "an help meet for him." As she would therefore compassionately nurse his body in pain and sickness; and prudently study and watch his temper, amidst the conflict of contending passions, so, to approve herself what God and nature meant her to be, she will guard his fame, the life of his life, "as her precious eye," and thus, in every thing relating both to mental and bodily health, to private comfort and public estimation, "she will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life."

But there is somewhat still dearer, still more sacred to a man than children or property, than health or reputation, somewhat which, neglected, forfeited, lost, it "will profit him nothing, to gain even the whole world;" and in the securing and promoting of which,

who is so qualified to minister and assist as her, whom the Father of mercies gave him, to be “an help meet for him?” I mean,

IV. The salvation of the immortal soul. This is indeed a personal concern; an interest which cannot be transferred or communicated. The good-will of another cannot impart it; the remissness of another cannot defeat it: to God, his great Master, here, every man standeth or falleth, for “every one must give account of himself to God.” But is it not obvious, that example, that reason, that co-operation, possess a mighty influence toward promoting or obstructing personal piety, growth in grace, meetness for the kingdom of heaven? Is the man impressed with the worth, with the danger of his own soul; does he feel “the powers of a world to come;” is his mind turned to devotion; is the love of God shed abroad in his heart? How will such impressions be fixed and strengthened, by endeavouring to communicate them to a beloved object, and by receiving back the impression, heightened and improved, from that object? How much more exalted and affecting, is a sense of divine goodness, when it is beheld embracing more than one! when it is seen conferring immortality, eternity, on virtuous human affections! what a live coal applied to devotion, when the solitary *my* Father and *my* God, is changed into the social *our* Father and *our* God! How is the hope of glory ennobled, extended, animated, by the prospect of participation! “Here am I, Holy Father, with her whom thou gavest me, to be *an help meet for me*. We were one in interest and affection; one in the faith of the gospel, and the practice of piety; our prayers ascended in one stream of incense, and every gift of thy providence and grace was multiplied and sweetened to each by being bestowed on the other. Sweet were our labours of love to our joint offspring; sweet our united efforts to improve the bounty of our common parent; sweet the

sympathies of kindred hearts, in sickness and in health, in sorrow and in joy, in good and in bad report; but sweeter far the consolations of religion, the prospect of *life and immortality brought to light by the gospel.*" We come together to "*receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls*"; as, through grace, we have been made helpers of each other's faith, let us be, eternally, helpers of each other's joy."

Is the man, unhappily, dead to all sense of religion; swallowed up of time and sense; is his great, or only inquiry, "What shall I eat, what shall I drink, where-withal shall I be clothed?" Or, more wretched still, is he delivered over "to commit iniquity with greediness," "and to glory in his shame?" What are the most likely means of awakening him to reflection, of reaching his conscience, of melting his heart, of changing his conduct? Preaching is vain, he turns "a deaf ear to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely;" prosperity fosters pride and forgetfulness of God; adversity only hardens him the more; reason is perverted, passion has acquired the ascendant, the power of habit predominates: but the Lord God has provided "an help meet for him." When public instruction and foreign reproof have failed, the mind is still accessible. The unaffected, unostentatious charm of genuine female piety is felt and understood, and becomes efficacious; the silent, unupbraiding regret of conjugal tenderness supplies the place of a thousand arguments, and forces its way to the heart; "the effectual fervent prayer" of a gracious woman "availeth much;" the "believing wife" draws to the Redeemer, with the cords of love, "the unbelieving husband;" she becomes the blessed instrument of "converting the sinner from the error of his way, she saves a soul from death, she hides a multitude of sins," and, in the noblest sense of the word, approves herself "an help meet" for man.

In all these important respects, the original design

of Eternal Wisdom, in the formation of woman, is plain and palpable. To have fulfilled one branch of duty, and even to have excelled in it, is no exemption from the obligation of the rest. The duties of life and of religion run in a series, one is linked with another, supports it, cannot be separated from it. To no purpose are children well educated, if through the indolence, folly, or vice of parents they are launched into the world in doubtful, dishonourable, embarrassed or distressful circumstances. What is it to me, that my fortune is prudently and frugally managed, if my person is neglected, my temper trifled with, my reputation sacrificed, "my good name filched from me?" And what is the acquisition of a world, at the expense of my soul?—

Let it be understood and remembered, that every word which has been said of the obligation laid on woman, as "an help meet" for man, applies with at least equal propriety and force, to man, as the helper and friend of woman. Does he possess superiority of any kind? It is evidently intended not to oppress, but to support. His greater strength is given for her protection; his more vigorous or profound powers of thought are designed to be her instructor and guide. Whatever advantage, real or apparent, each may have above the other, Providence clearly wills to be employed for the comfort and benefit of the other. A contention of mutual affection, beneficence, forbearance, forgiveness, is the only strife which nature, reason and decency permit to this state and relation.

We proceed to illustrate female utility and importance in social life, by certain noted examples from the sacred record. May God smile on every attempt to communicate useful truth. Amen.

HISTORY OF DEBORAH.

LECTURE II.

And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Beth-el in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment —JUDGES iv. 4, 5.

THE unremitting attention paid by a wise and gracious Providence to the affairs of men, affords equal matter of wonder and gratitude, with the astonishing power and skill displayed in the first formation of this great universe. Let us suppose the care of that Providence for a little while suspended, and the world left to itself. Who is not shocked in looking forward to the probable, the certain consequences of that remission? Behold instantly the bars of the vast abyss burst asunder, and “hell itself breathing forth destruction to mankind.” Behold the prince of the power of the air reigning and raging without control. Behold chaos and ancient night resuming their murky empire, and darkness covering the face of the deep; earth and air confounded; nature convulsed by the fury of contending elements, unrestrained by law; universal confusion and wild uproar prevailing.

Alas, it is not necessary to state the supposition so high. To conceive the wretchedness of mankind, deprived of the constant, superintending care of Heaven,

it is needless to let loose the demons of the bottomless pit; it is needless to unbridle the fury of the ocean, or to assist the roaring winds in blowing up the fire into a hotter flame. Under the *slightest* alteration of the established order of things, all nature languishes. Remove, for a moment, the all-ruling, all-supporting hand of the great Father of the universe, and lo, *this* fair and fertile region is overwhelmed with an inundation, and *that*, is burned to one pumice-stone, by the force of celestial or subterraneous fire. Here arises a race all males, like the fabled generation of warriors which sprung from the serpent's teeth, armed at all points for mutual destruction and slaughter; and there, a nation of timid, defenceless females, inviting violence and insult. But under that uninterrupted divine superintendence all goes on well; there is no schism in the body; every thing is found in its place, every thing performs its function. The exactest proportion between male and female births is preserved; the robuster frame is still found united to the stronger mental faculties; the delicacy of the feminine form indicates, to the very eye, the softer, gentler qualities of the spirit which inhabits it; and nature assigns to each the limits of duty, and the sphere of usefulness and exertion.

But the great God is pleased to make himself known, not only by general conformity to establish laws, but by occasional deviation from them. That the sons of men may know, it is according to his high will, that all creatures are, and think, and act.

The history, which this evening comes under our review, exhibits a new thing in the annals of human nature; asserts the sovereignty of the Most High over all persons and events; places the female character and importance in a new, a striking, and a respectable point of view; and thereby admonishes the one sex to think of their own natural general superiority with deference; affection and honour to the manly excellencies of the female mind, when cultivated by a proper education,

directed to a worthy object, and roused into exertion by a great and worthy occasion. Hitherto we have seen wise and good women, in the retired vale of domestic life, their proper and peculiar sphere; Sarah co-operating, in the duties of hospitality, with her venerable lord; Rebekah refreshing the weary traveller and the thirsty camel with water from the well, as they went on their way; Rachel and the seven daughters of Jethro tending their father's flocks, and making them to lie down under the shade at noon; Miriam leading the festive dance and song, in celebrating the loving kindness of the Lord, and the triumphs of Israel; and Rahab giving shelter to the persecuted spies, and providing for the safety of her father's house.

But we are now to contemplate female genius and talents forcing their way to public observation, and to everlasting renown: eclipsing masculine sagacity and fortitude; the inspirer and the example of generous patriotism and martial prowess. We are to contemplate feminine warmth and eagerness, under the influence of prophetic inspiration, and blended with the dignity and integrity of the judgment-seat; female spirit, giving breath to the bloody trumpet of war, directing the movements of the embattled host, waking into sacred, poetic rapture, and adapting the joyful strains of victory, to the musical sounds of the living lyre.

Israel had now enjoyed a blessed repose of four-score years; and are again corrupted by ease and prosperity. Their national character and conduct, are a striking representation of those, of many individuals, whom we are daily meeting with in the world; who are capable of bearing neither prosperity nor adversity; whom it is impossible to serve or to save; who by their perverseness or folly, are perpetually undoing the kindest designs, and counteracting the most vigorous efforts of their friends in their behalf, and whom, at length, friends are constrained to abandon in despair. Well has Nehemiah, their countryman, described this

character, and displayed the patience and long-suffering of God, in that recapitulation of their history, addressed solemnly to Heaven, in the ninth chapter of his book; “And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards and olive-yards, and fruit-trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness. Nevertheless, they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations. Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them; and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies. But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee: therefore leftest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them; yet when they returned and cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven, and many times didst thou deliver them, according to thy mercies; and testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them); and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear. Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy Spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands. Nevertheless, for thy great mercies sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God,” Neh. ix. 25—31.

If we are to judge of the atrocity of the offence committed on the occasion before us, from the severity of the punishment, the length of its duration, and the vio-

lence of their oppressor, we must conclude it to have been uncommonly grievous: for the Lord sold them into the hand of Jaban king of Canaan, part of whose formidable host consisted of nine hundred chariots of iron; and who for “twenty years together mightily oppressed the children of Israel.” Calamity is peculiarly oppressive, when it is imbittered with the reflection, that it might have been prevented; that it is the native fruit of our own doings: and with finding the wretched associates of our guilt the wretched partakers of our wo.

Hope seems quite extinguished in Israel. Not one man of common spirit, in the course of twenty years oppression, appears awakened to a sense of his country’s wrongs, and generously prompted to hazard his life in removing, or avenging them. But the cause of the church of God is never to be despaired of. Its emblem is, “the bush burning, but not consumed.” Its motto, “the bush burning, but not destroyed.” And whither are our eyes, at this time, directed to behold the saviour of a sinking country? Behold the residue of the spirit is upon the head of woman; the sacred flame of public spirit, smothered and dead in each manly breast, yet glows in a female bosom; and the tribunal of judgment, deserted by masculine virtue and ability, is honourably and usefully filled by feminine sensibility, discernment, honesty and zeal. “And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time,” Judges iv. 4. She was a wife and a mother in Israel, and such a wife is a crown to her husband, such a mother, the glory and pride of her children; but her great, her capacious soul embraced more than her own family, aimed at the happiness of thousands, sweetly blended public with private virtue. Is it unreasonable to suppose, that the discreet and wise management of her own household, first procured her the public notice and esteem: and that the prudent deportment of the matron, passed by a natural and easy transition into the sanctity of the prophetess, and the

gravity and authority of the judge? Certain it is, that the reputation which is not established on the basis of personal goodness, like a house built upon the sand, must speedily sink, and fall to pieces.

Hitherto, we have seen only “*holy men* of God speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” But the great Jehovah is no respecter of persons or sexes: “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he showeth unto them his holy covenant.” The simple dignity of her unadorned, unassuming state, is beautifully represented: “She dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Beth-el, in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment,” Judges iv. 5. Behold a female mind exalted above the pageantry and pride of external appearance; not deriving consequence from the splendour of her attire, the charms of her person, or the number of her retinue, but from the affability of her manners, the purity of her character, the sacredness of office, the impartiality of her conduct, the importance of her public services; not wandering from place to place, hunting after a little empty applause, but sought unto of all Israel for the eminency, and extensive utility of her talents and her virtues. Her canopy of state, was the shade of the palm-tree; her rule of judgment, the law and the testimony of the living God; her motive, the inspiration of the Almighty; her aim and end, the glory of God and the good of her people; her reward, the testimony of a good conscience, the respect of a grateful nation, the admiration of future generations, the smiles of approving Heaven. What are, compared to these, the ermined robe, the ivory sceptre, the chair of state, the glittering diadem!

But alas! what availeth the most upright and impartial administration of justice, among a people enslaved in the extreme, groaning under a foreign yoke, holding liberty, property and life, by the wretched tenure of a

tyrant's caprice? The ardent soul of Deborah aspires at nothing short of a total emancipation of her bleeding country from these inglorious chains. And like a true prophetess of the living and true God, she engages in this noble and generous enterprise, not with the zeal of an enthusiast, not in an idle, inactive reliance on supernatural assistance; but in the honest confidence of a good cause, the diligent use of the most promising means, and ultimate dependence on the blessing of Him "who worketh all things after the counsel of his will."

The character of this illustrious heroine, grows upon us as we proceed; and exhibits a picture of female excellence, to which her own sex may look with emulation and honest pride, and ours, with admiration and esteem, unmixed with envy. An ordinary woman in her place, and possessed of her advantages, would probably have aimed at the sole reputation of having delivered her country. But when a military operation is to be set on foot, for the attainment of this end, with the modest reserve becoming her sex, she satisfies herself with advising only. When the sword of Israel is to be drawn, let it be wielded by manly hands; let Barak come in for a share of the danger, the labour, and the praise. She is to be the directing head, and he the active hand. But what was the broken strength of two of the least of the tribes of Israel? What were ten thousand men to carry on offensive war against a power which could employ nine hundred chariots of iron as part of his force? What must have been the number of infantry that corresponded to this formidable armament? For such a handful of men to appear in arms, was to provoke their own fate, not to serve their bleeding country; it was to rouse their haughty oppressors into more violent rage and cruelty, not to attack them with a probability of success. The force called for by the prophetess, by divine appointment, was thus small, that the glory of all, in the issue, might be ascribed solely to God: and it was thus great, to teach mankind, that, as they hope

to prosper, their own exertions must co-operate with the influence of over-ruling Providence.

Such was either the general despondency that prevailed in Israel at that dark period, or such the general confidence reposed in Deborah, that Barak accepts the commission given him, and consents to head the forces of his country into the field, under the express condition that their prophetess and judge would be his companion and directress in the welfare. To this she yields a cordial assent, and cheerfully engages to take part in all that regarded the public service, whether counsel or resolution were needful to carry it on. She would not, could it with propriety be avoided, become a leader in arms, but feels no reluctance, is conscious of no fear, when attending the captain of the Lord's host into "the valley of decision." It is pleasant to observe how the manly virtues, properly modified and corrected, may be adopted into the female character not only without giving offence, but so as to communicate the highest satisfaction and win approbation; and how, on the other hand, the softest of the female graces, may, without sinking the manly character, without exciting contempt, become a shade to the boldest, hardest masculine qualities. Courage has been reckoned an attribute peculiar to men; but it is easy to conceive it so raised, and so expressed, and so exerted, as to be not only pardonable in, but highly ornamental to, woman. "A hen gathering her chickens under her wings," is a picture not only of maternal tenderness, but of undaunted intrepidity. "A bear bereaved of her whelps," is not more fierce and more fearless. A mother defying the danger of the pestilential air which she inhales from her smitten child; a mother flying as a lioness on the brutal wretch who dared to crush her little darling; how dignified, what a noble creature she is! A tender virgin stirred up into holy indignation at hearing her absent friend traduced by the tongue of malevolence, forgetting herself for a moment, to repel

the barbarous insult. O it is a disorder so lovely, that it almost deserves to be stamped with the name of virtue. To see Deborah quitting her seat under the palm-tree, to attend Barak to the top of mount Tabor, when the enemies of her God and of her country are to be engaged and subdued; what heart does not catch fire from her heroic ardour! what tongue can withhold its tribute of praise!

While Deborah, without hesitation, agrees to accompany Barak to the high places of the field, by virtue of the spirit of prophecy which was upon her, she informs him that the glory he should obtain, was to suffer considerable diminution, not only by her participation of it, but also by the communication of it to another woman, for whom Providence had reserved the honour of putting the last hand to this arduous undertaking. Indeed this seems to be a crisis, in the history of human nature, at which Providence intended to exhibit the powers of the female mind in all their force and all their extent; intended to represent the sex in every situation that can create esteem, inspire love, command respect, or awaken terror. The united spirits and achievements of Deborah, and Jael the wife of Heber, seem to comprehend the whole compass of the feminine character in its more extraordinary feelings and exertions; and in the displaying the conduct of these two individuals, rouse our attention to the whole sex, as the most warm, steady and affectionate of friends, or the most formidable, dangerous and determined of enemies.

But we must not bring forward both at once. We conclude with a reflection or two, on what has been suggested from the history of Deborah.

I. It exposes the folly of despising or undervaluing any description of our fellow-creatures in the lump. All national reflections are founded in ignorance and folly; and the despisers have often paid dear for their insolence and presumption. The illiberal abuse so indiscriminately poured upon the gentler sex, is of the

same nature. It generally comes from men something worse than the worst part of womankind. The truly sensible, and the truly brave, entertain far better and far more just sentiments of female utility and importance in the scale of being; and are ever disposed to ascribe to female capacity and worth, more than female modesty and wisdom are disposed to assume, or even to receive. No *good* man ever wished to see the female character undervalued or degraded; and perhaps very few *good* women have ever violently coveted stations and employments which belong peculiarly to men. But as nature delights in producing variety, as well as uniformity, it is not to be wondered at, if we sometimes meet with men more silly, timid and frivolous, than the most insignificant of the other sex; and on the other hand, women as daring, as enlightened, as magnanimous, as public spirited, as the first among mankind. The rivalry, however, and competition of the sexes, is altogether ridiculous and absurd. Each has its distinct, and both have their conjoined dignity and usefulness—and mutual concession is the truest wisdom in the one and the other.

But, II. However weak and contemptible the instrument were in itself, from the hand that wields it, it becomes mighty and respectable: and the history before us becomes, and that not darkly, a typical representation of the gospel of Christ, which was “to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.” Pride and self-sufficiency smile at the idea of a female prophet, a female judge, a female poet, a female politician, a female warrior; and yet, in truth, women have filled all these offices, with credit to themselves, and with satisfaction to the public. And “who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind!” In the honoured list of those who “through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge

of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens," female names too stood recorded with commendation and renown. And "what hast thou, O man, but what thou hast first received?"—"God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise: and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence."

III. As the great Ruler of the world never can want an instrument to save, so he is always provided with instruments to punish. "He is wise in heart and mighty in strength; who had hardened himself against him and hath prospered?" The haughtiest of monarchs is at length constrained to "praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase." "By a strong hand and stretched-out arm," Pharaoh is at length compelled to "let Israel go." "Humble" then "thyself," O man, "under his mighty hand." "Be wise now, O ye kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth, serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling."

The next Lecture will carry on the history of Deborah, in connexion with that of Jael. I conclude the present, with calling on the female part of my audience to bless God, that while he has carried some of their sex, through the most arduous employments, most eminent stations, and most hazardous enterprises, not only with safety, but with applause, he is pleased, in general, to put their talents and their virtues to a trial less severe; and let them remember, that after all which has been, or may be said, in praise of the few who have acted wisely and well upon the public theatre, to the generality, "the post of honour, is a private station."

HISTORY OF DEBORAH.

LECTURE III.

Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep, and weary. So he died. And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples. So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel.—JUDGES IV. 21—23.

WHEN we consider how frequent, how violent, and how sudden are the transitions from condition to condition in human life, pride appears to be a mystery of folly, below contempt. To behold a rational being assuming consequence on an empty, unmeaning title; or from the possession of a little wealth, that bird of passage, eternally on the wing; or from beauty and strength, which accident or disease may blast in a moment, and which the lapse of a very few years certainly will impair; to behold a man putting confidence in princes, or feeding on the applause of a multitude; to hear him saying to himself, “Soul, take thy rest; thou hast much goods laid up for many years.” “My mountain standeth strong; I shall never be moved.”

All this is calculated to excite derision, not resentment; and when reason and experience ponder what the end may be, anger sinks into pity. Not only is frail man every moment at the mercy of a Being, almighty to save and to destroy; but the proudest and mightiest is every moment in the power of the weakest and meanest of his fellow-creatures. The tongue of the wretch whom thou despisest, may ruin thy reputation for ever. The crawling insect in thy path is armed with deadly poison against thy life. That nodding wall threatens to crush thee to pieces. Arm thee at all points, as well as thou canst, malice or hatred, envy or revenge will still find some part unguarded; and, bleeding to death, thou shalt find thou wert not invulnerable.

Those who are distinguished by their rank, their abilities, or their virtues, attract the notice of many observers, and create to themselves many open and many more secret enemies. The history of Sisera, the captain of the host of Jabin, king of Canaan, is a striking illustration of most of these remarks. In him, we see a man rendered insolent by success, intoxicated with prosperity, betrayed into disgrace through confidence of victory, the dupe of confidence in his own strength, and then the victim of confidence, equally unwise, in the fidelity and attachment of a stranger. We behold him in the morning, advancing to the unequal conflict at the head of a mighty and hitherto invincible host; in the evening, a bleeding corpse, fallen ingloriously by the hand of a woman.

Deborah, the prophetess of Israel, having transfused the patriotic ardour of her soul into Barak, not only directs him what he should do, but offers herself as the companion of the expedition which she had planned. With ten thousand men of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali under his command, Barak takes possession of mount Tabor, meaning to act only on the defensive, till Providence should point out an occasion of

acting to advantage. The rashness and impetuosity of Sisera soon presented him with such an opportunity. Enraged to think that an enemy so often discomfited, so long oppressed, so broken by calamity, should presume to make head against their lordly masters, he collects the whole of his vast strength, and invests the mountain, determined to crush the puny insurrection at one blow.

The sagacious judge, and divinely inspired prophetess of Israel, observes the season to be favourable, observes that the unwieldy army of the Canaanites was ready to fall in pieces by its own weight, that their vain confidence was destroying them, and that, above all, Heaven was propitious. She gives the signal of attack, and lo, "one chases a thousand, and ten put ten thousand to flight." The cause was of God, and it prospers: and the mighty hand and out-stretched arm of Jehovah, once more asserts Israel into liberty.

Whatever praise is to be ascribed to the conduct of Barak on this occasion, and to the intrepidity of his little army, it is evident, from some expressions in the song of praise, composed in celebration of the victory, that the defeat of the Canaanites was in part, at least, miraculous. "They fought from Heaven." "The stars in their courses," it is said, "fought against Sisera." By "the stars" some interpreters understand "the angels of God," who are sometimes designated by that name. Josephus takes the words in a different sense, and affirms, that an extraordinary storm of rain, mixed with hail, blinded the eyes of the Canaanites, and drove back their darts upon their own heads. The Rabbins, with still less appearance of probability, alledge, that certain constellations of a pestilential influence, consumed the army of Sisera, burnt them up with thirst, and drove them for refreshment to the brook Kishon, where they were met in a languid, enfeebled state, by the troops of Deborah and Barak, and put to the sword. The expedition from first to last, was without controversy conducted and

crowned by the hand of Providence. But the narration of the event, on the sacred page, is too general and concise, to enable us to pronounce with confidence, where the province of human sagacity and valour ended; and where the interposition of Heaven began.

However it were, the victory was complete; the enemy was totally routed and put to the edge of the sword; the commander in chief alone escapes the universal carnage of the field; and he, who a little before had nine hundred chariots of iron at his disposal, sees himself stripped of all, and is constrained to consult his safety by flight. A prince without subjects, and a general without an army, shrink into poor, wretched, solitary individuals, the more to be pitied, from the giddy height whence they have fallen.

The history drops the myriads which composed the army of Sisera, into a silent grave; and pursues the sad tale of the unhappy man himself up to his tragical death. Seeing his army slaughtered and put to flight, and himself in danger of falling into the hands of triumphant Israel, he alights from his chariot, and flees away on foot. "How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" What a sad reverse, within the compass of one short day! And to such reverses, human life is eternally liable. The greatest of uninspired bards has put this passionate exclamation in the mouth of a dethroned monarch of our own country, addressing himself to his few wretched attendants, the poor remains of his departed state:

Cover your heads, and mock not flesh and blood
With solemn reverence; throw away respect,
Tradition, form, and ceremonious duty,
For you have but mistook me all this while:
I live on bread like you, feel want, taste grief,
Need friends:—Subjected thus,
How can you say to me—I am a king.

SHAKSPEARE—King Richard II.

Behold the mighty Sisera weary and faint with thirst,

without one, of so many thousands, to assist or comfort his flight, seeking refuge from his pursuers in the tents of an allied power, Heber the Kenite.

By looking back to the book of Numbers, chap. x. we find that Hobab, the son of Raguel or Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, had left his native residence, to attend the camp of Israel as their guide through the wilderness, and had been persuaded by Moses, his brother-in-law, to cast in his lot among that people, upon a solemn assurance, that, on their settlement in Canaan, he, and his family, and descendants, should share in the fruits of victory, and obtain a portion in the land promised to the children of Abraham. This accounts for our finding them established, at such a distance of time, in the border of Kedesh Naphtali. On the invasion of the country, however, by Jabin, king of Canaan, we find them observing a strict neutrality. "There was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor, and the house of Heber the Kenite," Verse 17. In the confidence of this, Sisera betakes himself to the Kenite for protection; and is received by Jael, the wife of Heber, with every mark of humanity and respect, due to a great man, and a friend, in distress. She brings him milk to quench his thirst, covers him carefully up in her own tent to repose himself from the vexation and fatigue of that disastrous day, and to conceal him from the pursuit of Barak. She promises inviolably to keep secret the place of his concealment; and relying on that promise, weary and worn out, he falls into a profound sleep. Jael avails herself of his defenceless situation, and siezing such arms as were at hand, a hammer and one of the pins or nails used in stretching out the tent, she transfixes the head of the unhappy sleeper as he lay along, and with redoubled blows fastens the bleeding temples to the ground.

Such was the inglorious end of a man, on whom that morning's sun had risen with a smiling aspect; who awoke from sleep in the possession of all that royal

favour could bestow, all that sovereign power could compel, all that flattering hope could promise. Of the motives which could impel Jael to such a deed of horror, we have no information. Her conduct, we know, is celebrated in the Song of Deborah, in terms of the strongest approbation; which obliges us to conclude that there are circumstances in the story, which the Spirit of God has not thought proper to disclose. The great Jehovah needs not a vindication of his conduct, from the labour and ingenuity of a wretched, ignorant mortal. He has but to discover a few little particulars, which are as yet hid from our eyes, and then, what now confounds and overwhelms our understanding, becomes clear and intelligible to the meanest capacity. Instead, therefore, of vainly and presumptuously attempting to reconcile this action of Jael with the laws of morality, which, by the glimmering light we have, is impossible, we shall make a few observations on the history, of a general and practical nature. And

I. We repeat, what has been already suggested, "that human reason is a very incompetent judge of divine proceeding." We know so little, so very little of the system of nature; our own constitution is such an inexplicable mystery to ourselves; we meet every where so many difficulties, contradictions, defects, redundancies; at least we take upon us to think and call them so, as must lead us to this conclusion, that, either the work of God is imperfect, or that we cannot find out him and his work unto perfection. Now the little reason we have, cannot hesitate an instant in choosing its side of this alternative. And if we confessedly are unqualified to judge of that which is less, dare we presume to pronounce concerning that which is greater. If the volume of nature, spread open to the perusal at once of our senses and our reason, present many things not only hard, but impossible to be understood, can we deem ourselves qualified or en-

titled to explain, to justify, or to arraign the more dark and mysterious ways of Providence? And which is the greater pride and presumption, that which is for ever "charging God foolishly," or that which sets itself up as the bold interpreter and assistant of eternal wisdom and justice? Observe,

II. An obvious reason why these difficulties are permitted in the frame of nature, the conduct of Providence, and the revelation of the grace of God. It is, to form us to submission, to exercise our patience, to fix our attention, to whet our industry, to repress our boldness, to increase and confirm our confidence in God. It is a mark of respect to superior wisdom and virtue, not always to require an explanation, but to repose implicit trust in known goodness and integrity. A wise man, in the consciousness of his own rectitude, disdains to acknowledge the obligation of clearing up his conduct to every prating meddler who may think proper to call him to account; and who has neither a right nor a capacity to judge of his motives. And shall we withhold from our Maker, that decent respect which we so cheerfully pay to a fallible, imperfect fellow creature? Shall we refuse to take the God of truth upon his word? Shall we think it much if in some cases he exact belief without his vouchsafing to assign a reason? "Why dost thou strive against him? He giveth not account of any of his matters," Job xxxiii. 13. Our sacred bard has sublimely expressed this noble sentiment, drawn from the volume of inspiration. Considering the divine Providence under the image of a vast sealed up book, chained to the eternal throne, containing the character, the revolutions, the destination of angels and men, but closed to the inspection of every created eye. We observe,

III. That it is doing the grossest injustice to the wise and righteous Governor of the world, to suppose him in every point approving the person or the conduct by which he carries on his great designs. Cyrus

and Nebuchadnezzar are styled the servants of God, though the one knew him not, and the other openly defied him. The rod which he condescendeth to use, for the chastisement of disobedient and gainsaying children, when their reformation is accomplished, he often breaks and dashes on the ground. Every instrument he employs must necessarily partake of human imperfection; but it follows not that he is pleased with imperfection. The devices of Satan himself shall in the issue redound to the glory of God, as “the wrath of man must praise him;” but that wrath is hateful to his nature, and those devices his wisdom counteracts, and his justice condemns. We are not therefore to mistake the patriotic ardour of a female Israelitish bard, for the calm, the merited applause of the God of mercy and truth. I can easily conceive the person, whom national partiality, resentment or gratitude would celebrate in strains of admiration, to be regarded with adhorrence by the Father of mercies, the avenger of falsehood, the refuge of the miserable. And while Israelitish Deborah, in the heat of her zeal, makes the eulogium of a woman so unlike herself, and styles Jael, the wife of Heber, who murdered her sleeping guest, “blessed above women,” why may not a christain Dorcas, a woman of mercy and humanity, “a woman full of good works, and alms deeds,” under the mild and gentle influence of that religion which she believes, feels and practises, reprobate the cruel and perfidious act, and its author, in terms of the severest indignation? Indeed, the conduct of Jael, considered by itself, is a horrid complication of all that is base and detestable in human nature; an infamous violation of sacred truth; a daring infringement of the law of nature and nations; a flagrant breach of the laws of hospitality, which the most savage natures and nations have respected as sacred; the vilest degradation of her character as a woman; the most barbarous exhibition of a little mind, enjoying the triumph

over unsuspecting credulity, and defenceless misery. "Cursed be her anger, for it was fierce, and her wrath, for it was cruel." Observe,

IV. Into what dreadful extremes we impetuously rush, when the radical principles of our nature are once subdued. Time must have been, that the idea of shedding the blood of another, would have chilled the blood in Jael's veins. What must it have cost her, to overcome the timidity, the tenderness, the compassion of her sex? But being overcome, lo, each gentle, feminine passion is lulled asleep; and frantic zeal, or demoniac revenge alone is awake. Ah me, what beast of prey so savage and unrelenting, as a human being destitute of pity! Ah me, how easily the best things degenerate into the worst! Of what importance is it, to guard against the first deviation from the simple and direct path! Who can promise for himself, that he shall stop, return, and regain the right road, when he pleases? Observe,

V. That the rarity of the instances, the peculiarity of the situations, and the singularity of the spirit and conduct, apparent in the female characters here brought into public view, forbid, by more than a positive law, female interference in matters of business and of government. Believe me, my fair friends, it is not stripping you of your just importance, it is increasing and securing it, to say, the shade is your native, your proper station: it is there you shine, it is there you are useful, it is there you are respectable. Your heart and your understanding assent to the truth of it. Is there a woman among you, who would not prefer in obscurity, the affection of her husband, the attachment and gratitude of her children, the estimation and respect of her friends, to all the public splendour of Deborah's magisterial power, and prophetic spirit; to all the blushing, empurpled honours of Jael's more than masculine resentment? It is not your want of talents for government we dispute; it is the suitableness of government to your talents, your natural dispositions, your real honour and happiness.

A wise and good woman never can desire to become the object of universal admiration, nor the subject of every one's discourse. If you aim at so much, depend upon it, you will lose something of what you have, and what is infinitely better than all the incense of flattery, than all the sonnets of a thousand poetic swains. In the history of our own country, the reigns of two female sovereigns shine with conspicuous lustre. They were periods of great national prosperity and glory. But the weakest of women would not surely thence infer, that the sceptre ought always to be committed to female hands. With all due deference to the memory of an Elizabeth and an Anne, and the general felicity which their administration diffused over the land; Great Britain can look with pride and exultation to a Queen, whose personal glory and virtues far exceed theirs. Not a sovereign indeed, but a partner of the throne: who shines in reason's eye, because she affects not to shine; reigns over willing hearts, because she disclaims all rule; is great and blessed among women, because she nobly sinks the princess in the woman, the wife, the mother, and the friend.

We encroach no further on your patience, by extending our observations on the subject. And the rather, as a review of the song of Deborah, composed on this memorable occasion, will, if God permit, bring it again before us, and place female genius in our eye, in a new, and not unpleasing point of light; uniting poetic and musical skill to fervent devotion, heroic intrepidity, and prophetic inspiration. A combination how rare, how instructive, how respectable!

HISTORY OF DEBORAH.

LECTURE IV.

Then sang Deborah, and Barak the son of Abinoam, on that day, saying, Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves. Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I, will sing unto the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel. Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel.—
JUDGES V. 1—5.

TO some it is the gift of Heaven, to perform actions worthy of being recorded; to others it is given, to preserve the memory of illustrious actions, in writings worthy of being read. To both, the world is under great obligations, and gratefully permits the historian or the poet, to divide the palm with the hero, or the sage, whom they celebrate. To the writer, perhaps, the more ample share of praise is due. The achievements of valour and strength are local and temporary. They benefit but a few, and quickly spend their force. But the historic and poetic page, more durable, more diffused, and more conspicuous than monuments of brass and marble, is an universal and a perpetual

blessing to mankind; conveying to distant nations and latest posterity harmless pleasure blended with wholesome instruction.

On a favoured few has been conferred the combined glory of acting nobly, and writing well; of serving their own day and generation with credit to themselves and advantage to their country, and of transmitting useful information to regions remote and generations unborn. On the list of these illustrious few, stands with distinguished honour, the name of Deborah, the judge, the prophetess, the sweet singer of Israel; and it is with exultation we observe the most dignified, arduous and important stations of human life filled with reputation by a woman: a woman, who first, with resolution and intrepidity, saved her country in the hour of danger and distress, and ruled it with wisdom and equity; and then recorded her own achievements in strains which must be held in admiration, so long as good taste and the love of virtue exist in the world.

Having with veneration and respect attended to the equitable decisions, and the oracles of truth which flowed from the lips of the female seer and sage, who sat under the palm-tree in mount Ephraim; and accompanied the undaunted heroine to the top of mount Tabor, and the ensanguined plains washed by the river of Kishon; let us listen with wonder and delight to the lofty strains of the female bard, and join our voices in the burden of her song.

This sublime poem is the most ancient that exists, two excepted, namely, that which celebrates the miraculous passage through the Red Sea; and the sweetly swelling notes of the dying swain of Israel. It is two hundred and thirty-four years later than the former, and one hundred and ninety-four years than the latter of these sacred compositions; but it is four hundred and ten years older than Homer, the great father of heathen poesy. From its high antiquity therefore, were there nothing else to recommend it to notice, it is most re-

spectable; but from its antiquity and the very nature of poetical composition, it must of necessity be, in some respects, involved in difficulty and obscurity. This we pretend not wholly to clear up or to remove. Instead then of making an attempt in which we should probably, perhaps certainly fail, we shall satisfy ourselves with pointing out a few of the more obvious and striking beauties of a piece, which all will allow to contain many and shining excellencies.

The inscription of this hymn of praise, first challenges our notice. "Then sang Deborah, and Barak the son of Abinoam, on that day, saying," Verse 1. In exhibiting the character and conduct of this truly estimable woman, the feminine delicacy and reserve are never dropped. As a ruler and a prophetess she is introduced under her relative character of the wife of Lapidoth. As the leader of armies to battle, and leader in the musical choir which celebrated the victories of her country, she is represented as the companion and coadjutrix of Barak, the son of Abinoam. She was undoubtedly the first woman of her own, perhaps of any age; but her consequence, in place of being diminished, is increased and supported by the blending of private, personal worth and ability, with the relations of social life, those of wife, mother and friend.

Adam might exist a little while in paradise, before Eve was formed, but nature and reason and religion, all seem to declare, that woman can neither comfortably nor reputably subsist, separated from that side whence she was originally taken. Who will deny, that the superiority in point of discretion and understanding is frequently on the side of the female? But a woman forfeits all pretension to that very superiority, the moment she assumes or boasts of it. Whether, therefore, it were Deborah's own good sense, and female modesty, which preferred appearing in a connected to appearing in a solitary state, though more flattering to vanity; or whether the Spirit of God, in repre-

sending the most elevated of female geniuses in the most elevated of situations, thought proper to point her out as connected and dependent; the same lesson of moderation, diffidence, delicacy and condescension is powerfully inculcated: and her sex is instructed where their true dignity, safety, honour and comfort lie.

The time is marked, when this triumphant anthem was first composed and sung. "On that day." It had been a day of danger, anxiety and fatigue: a day of vengeance upon the insulting foe, a day of mutual congratulation and rejoicing; but ill had Israel deserved such a victory, and shamefully had Deborah improved it, if either the emotions of joy or of revenge had excluded those of gratitude and love. The tongue of Deborah, like the pen of a ready writer, dictates "acceptable words" to the thousands of her people; she cannot think of repose, till the evening sacrifice of praise be offered up, and from the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. The day which the arm of Omnipotence had distinguished by wonders of mercy, must not be concluded without songs of deliverance. From "the confused noise of the warrior, and garments rolled in blood," the soul turns with holy joy, to the acknowledgment of that "right hand and holy arm which had gotten them the victory:" and in one solemn "praise ye the Lord" bursting at once from every tongue, every redeemed Israelite calls upon himself and upon his fellow to give unto JEHOVAH the glory due unto his name.

Here the song naturally begins, by this it must be supported, and in this it must terminate. All creatures, all events point out "Him first, Him last, Him midst, and without end." "Praise ye the Lord."

But, religion is "a reasonable service." The divine essence we do not, we cannot know; "the invisible things of God," even "his eternal power and deity," are to be discovered only "by the things which he has made," and the things which he doth. Here then the spirit of praise immediately fixes, and

the recent interposition of a gracious Providence rises instantly into view: his “avenging of Israel,” in which Jehovah is acknowledged as at once just and merciful: just, in recompensing tribulation to them that troubled his covenanted church and people; merciful in giving his troubled people rest.

Vengeance; the vengeance of God! Fearful thought! but oh, it is sweetly relieved, by the reflection, that the right of executing vengeance, is claimed by the God of mercy, with awful propriety, as his own. This dreadful thunder no arm but his own must presume to wield; “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.” If I must be punished, “let me fall now into the hand of the LORD, for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.” The only vengeance permitted to man is a vengeance of kindness and forgiveness; the only coals which he must scatter, are the coals of the fire of love. “If thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirst, give him drink:”—“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

The voluntary actions of the people in “offering themselves” to fight their own battles, are with singular beauty ascribed to the wisdom and goodness of God who has the “hearts of all in his hand,” and can “turn them which way soever he will.” He who could have saved by miracles, will save by means. If there be a spirit of concord to resist the common enemy, it is of the LORD. If internal dissention aid the enemy without, we behold a righteous God infatuating those whom he means to destroy.

Having thus simply proposed the glorious subject of her praise, “the sweet enthusiast” prepares to unfold

and amplify it. She throws her eyes over the face of the whole earth; views all nations and their potentates, as interested in the glowing theme; and summons an admiring world to listen to her song. "Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I, will sing unto the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel," Verse 3. What so delightful to a grateful and affectionate heart, as the enumeration of benefits received! What benefactor once to be compared with the Giver of all good, "the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good gift, and every perfect!"

Having proposed her theme and summoned her august audience, the divine poetess seems to pause for a moment, as if awed by the presence of such a splendid audience, and overwhelmed with the magnitude of the task she has undertaken, and with renovated strength, aims her flight, like the eagle, up to her native skies. The deliverance of that day, brings former wonders of mercy to mind; and "God, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever," is seen and adored in all. Instead of expatiating on the goodness of the Most High in strains addressed to the "kings and princes" whom she had called to attend, she rises at once to "JEHOVAH's awful throne," loses all sense of created majesty, and loses herself in the contemplation of infinite perfection. "Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel," Verse 4, 5.

The former part of this animated address probably refers to that passage in the history of Israel which we have in the book of Numbers, chap. xx, relating to the passage of Israel through the land of Idumea, which was humbly and peaceably solicited, and unkindly refused. Of this, some particulars might have been preserved by tradition to the times of Deborah, though not

admitted into the sacred canon, and suggested to her the lofty expressions which she here employs in celebrating the praises of Israel's God. Though he would not permit them to force a passage by the sword, through the country given to the posterity of Esau their brother, yet in guiding them round the confines of Idumea, in the majestic symbol of his presence, the pillar of cloud and fire, the great God might, by some sensible tokens, make Edom to know, it was not from want of power, but of inclination, that he led his people in a circuitous course. The language of the prophetess, divested of its bold figurative dress, is simply this, "The wonders of this day, O Lord, recal and equal the greatest wonders of ages past. We have seen the stars in their courses fighting against our enemies, as our fathers of old saw mountain and plain, heaven and earth, giving testimony to the presence and favour of the God of Israel. The field of Edom and the vale of Kishon are equally filled with the glory of the Lord. We recognize in the hand which has discomfited the host of Sisera, the same almighty power which restrained the Idumean, and conducted our ancestors if not the nearest, certainly the best road to Canaan."

The latter part of the address evidently refers to the awful solemnity with which the law was given from Mount Sinai; in which all nature, without a figure, bare witness to the presence and power of nature's God. "The earth trembled, the hills melted like wax," the face of heaven was covered with blackness of darkness, lightning flashed, the hoarse thunder roared, the louder and more dreadful voice of the Eternal drowned its tremendous sound, men's hearts fail them for fear, Moses quakes.

What matter of joy to Israel, that he who of old had thus revealed his fiery law, that day, that very day had come riding on the swift wings of the wind for their salvation! To fix these emotions of rising gratitude and wonder, the bard dexterously and im-

perceptibly slides into a review of the recent distress and misery of her unhappy country; distress yet fresh in every one's memory, misery out of which they were just beginning to emerge; and she takes occasion to pay a just tribute of respect to the memory of a great man, whom God had honoured to be the instrument of redemption to an oppressed people.

Those who are themselves the most deserving of praise, are ever the most liberal in bestowing it, where it is due. It is a slender and contemptible merit which seeks to shine by obscuring, concealing or diminishing the worth of another. Deborah is but the more estimable, for the frank and unreserved commendation which she confers on departed or contemporary virtue and talents. "In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the high ways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through by-ways. The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel," Verse 6, 7. What a melancholy picture have we here of a ruined, wretched country? By means of oppression, all intercourse is interrupted; commerce is languishing to death; life and property have become insecure: every thing dear to man is at the mercy of a haughty tyrant; ever exposed to the ravages of a lawless band of armed ruffians: the scanty and dejected inhabitants tremble at the sound of their own feet, at the sight of their own shadow; behold them skulking from place to place, stealing through by-ways, to carry on a starved and precarious traffic; suffering much, and fearing worse.

Ah, little do we reflect, living at our ease, enjoying the blessings of mild and equitable government, "sitting every one under his vine, and under his fig-tree, while there is none to make us afraid:" little do we reflect on the misery and tears of myriads of our fellow-creatures oppressed, and there is none to help them; whose cry incessantly rises up to heaven, but rises in

despair. Think what multitudes of the bold and hardy Africans are yearly driven or trepanned into servitude, through the violence or craft of their own countrymen, or, through the more fierce and unrelenting principle of European avarice, which has reduced slavery to a system, has invented an article of commerce which God and nature abhor, and concur to prohibit; and what is the subject of the infamous, impious traffic? the souls and bodies of men.

Who can turn his eyes, without weeping tears of blood, to the fertile soil, the clement air, and the simple, harmless inhabitants of the eastern world, and observe the gifts of nature perverted into a curse, the goodness of Providence thwarted by the cursed lust of power, or more cursed lust of wealth, and the patient, uncomplaining Asiatic, perishing for hunger, in his own luxuriant domain: and the Ganges disgorging millions of fetid corpses into the ocean, the corpses of wretches who died for lack of food, to purchase for a still greater wretch an empty title, and a seat among the lawgivers of the wisest, most polished and humane of the nations of the western world.

Look to the thin and scanty remains of the populous and prosperous nations of the southern hemisphere, and a land whose veins are gold, and its mountains silver, of which Spanish cruelty and avarice have been constrained to make a desert, in order to secure the possession of it. Behold the sullen, dejected native trampling under his feet gold and diamonds, which he dare not put forth his hand to touch; and reproaching Heaven with heaping, upon him, in its anger, treasures which have attracted not the pious zeal and attention, but the infernal rage who nevertheless dare to call themselves christians.

Behold yet again—No, I sicken at the horrid prospect—and will no longer encroach upon the feelings of humanity, by exhibiting the more than savage barbarity of systematic cruelty and oppression. God

of mercy, put a speedy end to these horrors! assert thy offspring into liberty, the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Let us return to the sweet mistress of Israelitish song; I see her warm, and rise into native, conscious worth and importance: and honour the lovely pride, the honest vanity of the female patriot. “The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel,” Verse 7. If ever there were ability, if ever there were services, if ever there were an occasion, which could warrant self-praise, it was the ability, the public services of Deborah, and the glorious occasion on which she wrote and sung. Show me such exertions for the public good, and let a man, let a woman be as vain as they will, and let affected humility and self-denial say what they will, it is an honourable and laudable ground of glorying, that God has made us the means of conveying happiness to others. But occasions of doing justice to eminent, public female worth so seldom occur, that I must reserve to myself the pleasure of accompanying this great woman, this more than princess, through the remainder of her song, in another Lecture.

—Men and brethren, we are furnished with a much more noble subject of praise—a subject which angels delight to celebrate in celestial strains—a subject which carries us back into the eternal counsels of peace “before the world was,” which carries us forward to the grand consummation, when “time shall be no longer;” when “the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads:” when “they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” Need I point out the era, christians, and the spot, and the performers, and the audience, or repeat the words of the lofty theme?—“There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came

upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men," Luke ii. 8—14. Here are celebrated, not the transient interests of a petty tribe, the momentary triumph of the oppressed, and the downfall of the oppressor; not events which have long ago spent all their force, and left no trace behind; but the broad, unbounded, permanent interests of mankind; the triumph of "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge;" of "the peace of God which passeth all understanding;" events which extend their influence into eternity. We celebrate "the praises of Him, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light"—of God, who "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. Of "Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen," Rev. i. 5, 6. Of Him "who, through death, has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil." The burden of the christian's song is, "Salvation," salvation begun, going on, ready to be accomplished. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever," Rev. xi. 15.

The song of Deborah exhibits awful distinctions between man and man, between nation and nation; pre-

sents a mystery of Providence, which human understanding endeavours in vain to trace: in the song of the redeemed of the Lord, all distinction is abolished; it presents a mystery of grace which “angels desire to look into;” it is in full harmony sung, by those who have “come from the east and from the west, from the south and from the north, and have sat down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God:” where the spirit of this world finds no place, and its differences are absorbed of the “spirit of love; where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all.” Let these reflections be practically improved, in conformity to the apostolic exhortation, by our daily learning to “put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another—and above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts.” Amen.

HISTORY OF DEBORAH.

LECTURE V.

Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam. Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty.—
JUDGES v. 12, 13.

IT is natural for man to look forward to futurity; and to derive a part, at least, of his felicity and importance from the estimation in which he is to be held by posterity. He knows that his body must soon die, and his connexion with the world be dissolved; but he flatters himself with the fond hope, that his name may survive his ashes, and that his memory may be cherished and respected, though his person be lost in the grave and sink into oblivion.

When this anticipation, and desire of immortality, serve as a stimulus to virtuous exertion, and call forth wisdom and goodness, honourably to fulfil their day, the love of fame is a respectable principle in the individual, because it becomes a blessing to mankind. But to wade to the temple of fame through a sea of blood; to extract “the bubble reputation” from widows’ tears and the groans of expiring wretches, is worse than contemptible, it is detestable, it is monstrous. And, whatever national partiality and prejudice may

have done, reason and humanity will always regard such characters as Alexander and Cæsar with abhorrence, strip them of their ill-earned glory, and stigmatize their names to the latest generations, as the enemies of mankind.

The spirit of patriotism, in other respects noble and excellent, is here faulty, pernicious, and worthy of the severest censure. It encroaches on the sacred rights of loving kindness and tender mercy. It encroaches on the more sacred prerogatives of high Heaven. It would make the God of the spirits of all flesh, a party in the quarrels of two petty states, and force the great interests of an universe to bend to the caprice, the pride, the ambition or revenge of some paltry prince. Hence, the literary monuments of all nations, exhibit a narrow, illiberal, ungenerous, impious spirit. The warlike genius of Rome acquired the ascendant over her rival Carthage. The literary genius of that gallant people assumed the superiority of course; and *Punic* perfidy, barbarity and cowardice, became the subject of proverbial apothegms, historical records, and poetical rhapsodies. But suppose, for a moment, the scales changed, and the fate of Carthage preponderating, and we should have had this whole picture reversed; and *Roman*, not *Punic* faithlessness, cruelty and cowardice, had been the burden of the song, and the object of detestation. While *our* notes of triumph rend the vault of Heaven, cross that brook, look forward from the summit of that little hill, where we are celebrating victory with all the insolence of success, and erecting the monumental column to prosperous valour, and nought is to be seen, but sighs of wo; no voice is to be heard, but that of lamentation and despair; while angels, from yonder sphere, look down with pity and concern, such as angels feel, on both the victor and the vanquished. "The broad eye of one Creator, takes in all mankind: his laws expand the heart;" and the "*Te Deum*," which angels sing with

rapture, is, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men."

We must carry these ideas with us as a corrective to the vehemence of poetical enthusiasm, and learn still to distinguish between the rapturous praise and censure of a female patriot, and the calm, equitable, unbiassed applause or condemnation of unerring wisdom and eternal justice. In the picture of human nature here suspended before our eyes, we behold it, as it is, not what it ought, in all respects, to be.

Deborah having proposed her subject, in plain and simple terms, in the second verse, and summoned the princes and potentates of the earth to listen to her song, as if the whole world were interested in the event she was about to celebrate, she presents to them an object supremely worthy of their attention and reverence, namely, the great JEHOVAH marching in awful state before the armies of his people, and delivering to them his dreadful law from Sinai, while universal nature bears witness to the presence of the Creator and Lord of all. "The earth trembling, the mountains melting, the powers of heaven shaken."

From thence she turns a weeping eye to the recent miseries of her yet bleeding country, and summons her compatriots to gratitude and joy, for the deliverance of that day, from the recollection of the cruel restraints under which they so lately lived, and the calamities which they endured: and she rises into holy rapture at the thought, that a gracious Providence had not only wrought salvation for his people, but made her the blessed instrument of effecting it. But in recalling the memory of former evils, in order to awaken holy joy, she fails not to trace those evils up to their proper source, in order to excite holy sorrow and contrition; "They choose new gods; then was war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?" Verse 8.

The great object of the prophetess is, to impress this

everlasting and unchangeable truth, that sin is the ruin of any nation, and that salvation is of the Lord. The moment a new god is set up, behold a new enemy is in the gate. That instant the idol is pulled down, the hope of Israel revives. The poetic question of Deborah, "was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?" expresses the highest degree of political dejection and distress; and represents the insulting foe, as not only filling all their borders with present consternation, but also undermining all their hope for the time to come; stripping them of every kind of armour both for defence and attack; to such a degree, that not one man, out of forty thousand, was furnished for the field.

A Jewish rabbin* has given a turn somewhat different to the words of the text, and not an absurd one. "Has Israel chosen new gods? then was war in the gates. Was there shield or spear seen among forty thousand?" that is to say, "From the time that Israel made choice of strange gods, they were under a necessity of maintaining war in their gates; or, of supporting a standing army for defence against the inroads of their enemies. But now that you offer yourselves willingly to the Lord, and put away the strange gods which are among you, see whether you have any need of shield or spear against the most formidable and numerous hosts of foes, against the thousands and forty thousands of Canaan? No, JEHOVAH himself is your shield and buckler, he fights your battles. Heaven and earth combine to destroy the adversary, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera, the river Kishon swallows them up."

"My heart is towards the governors of Israel that offered themselves willingly among the people: Bless ye the Lord. Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way. They

* Sal. Jarchi, page 64.

that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord; even the righteous acts towards the inhabitants of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates," Verse 9—11. That we may enter into the true spirit of the patriotic bard, let us suppose, what it is apparent she has in view, namely, severally to address the various orders and descriptions of men, whereof the Israelitish state was composed, and who had each a peculiar, as well as a common interest, in the salvation which they celebrated. She begins with her companions in the warfare, who, roused by her exhortations, and a sense of their country's wrongs, had cheerfully offered themselves to this laborious and hazardous service. "My heart is towards the governors of Israel that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the Lord," Verse 9. They best know how little was due to human skill and valour, how much to the gracious and powerful interposition of Heaven; let them, therefore, lead the band, and ascribe unto Jehovah the glory due unto his name. She next turns to the civil governors and judges of the land, and invites them to continue the song. "Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way," Verse 10. Such was the simple state in which the rulers of Israel travelled from place to place, administering justice. The ideas, in her address to them, are tender and pathetic, and may be thus extended, "Alas! my associates in government, it was but yesterday, that we were rulers without subjects, judges without a tribunal, and without authority: the lives and property of Israel were not secured and protected by law, but were at the disposal of a foreign lawless despot; and your progress through the land in the exercise of your high office, was checked and overawed by a licensed banditti. Let us rejoice together, that government has reverted to its channel; the highways

are no longer blocked up, and therefore no longer unoccupied. Place your thrones of judgment where you will, in the gate, in the highway, the communication is open, there is none to make you afraid, the enemies whom you have seen, you shall see them no more again for ever."

Her next address seems to be made to the shepherds of the lately oppressed country. "They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, even the righteous acts towards the inhabitants of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates," Verse 11. They are represented as trembling at the sound of their own feet among the pebbles of the brook, lest thereby they should awaken the attention of their rapacious masters; they are afraid to drive their flocks to the watering place, lest they should expose themselves and their harmless fleecy charge, to the cruel shafts of the archer, ever on the watch to gall and annoy them. But now, there, even there, in the very scene of their sorrow and misery, where the rustling of a leaf durst not be heard, they shall break out together into singing; there free from sorrow, free from fear, "shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, even the righteous acts to the inhabitants of the villages in Israel." Finally, she calls upon the inhabitants of the villages, the husbandman and vine-dressers, to add their voice to the swelling band, on recovering their tranquillity, on being restored to the felicity of labouring for themselves, and saved from the mortification of seeing lazy, insolent strangers devouring the fruit of their painful toil, and repairing, as before, in happier days, to their own gates, to their own judges for justice and judgment. Thus we hear, as it were, the tuneful choir gradually increasing in number, the peasant taking up the song which the shepherd had put into his mouth, the shepherd following the magis-

trate, the magistrate the soldier, till all Israel becomes one voice, one heart, one soul, to celebrate the high praises of God. Faint representation of that more glorious consummation, that purer triumph, that more auspicious day, that inexpressibly more important salvation, to which the believer in Christ Jesus looks in hope.

The voice of this universal chorus having ceased, a solemn pause of some moments seems to ensue; when the divinely-inspired poetess awakes to new rapture; and the harmony of myriads of joyful voices subsides into the melody of one simple strain. "Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam," Verse 12. What genuine touches of nature have we here, what simplicity, what pathos, what sublimity! She seems to regret her exhausted powers; her spirit is still willing; she cannot bear to cease so soon from so divine an employ: she starts into fresh enthusiasm. Having put words of praise into the mouths of a whole saved people, she takes up her own peculiar strain; "Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song:" And then, turning to the companion of her victory, excites him to make a public display of the wonderful trophies of that wondrous day; "Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam." Exhibit them in chains, who had forged chains for the hands and feet of Israel; lead them captive, who led in captivity the free-born sons of God; show triumphantly the spoils of them that spoiled thee; "the prey taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered;" them that "oppressed thee fed with their own flesh, and drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine;" a righteous "God contending with them, who contended with thee," "thou son of Abinoam." She rouses her noble colleague to excel in praise, as he had excelled in counsel and courage, by one of the most powerful motives of human conduct, the honour of his father's

name and family. Let the names of Barak and Abinoam be transmitted, hand in hand, with respect, to the latest generations; let the world know that on Abinoam a gracious Providence conferred the distinguished honour of being the father of the father of his country.

It is not ancestry, it is not country that can bestow celebrity on a deedless name, on an idle or worthless character; it is illustrious virtue, it is superior wisdom, it is useful ability that confers nobility, true nobility on families, and celebrity on countries. Contending cities claim the honour of giving birth to Homer. Strip Athens of her renowned sons, and she sinks into a mass of rocks and sand. How would the heart of Abinoam glow with delight, as often as the sound of his name reached his ears, in connexion with that of a son whom a grateful country acknowledged, and celebrated with songs, as its saviour!

In the 13th verse we see the low and reduced state of Israel again brought into view, to prepare for a fresh discovery of the power and goodness of God, and to exhibit in another point of light, the solidity, strength and security of his church, “out of weakness made strong,” “waxing,” in a moment, “valiant in fight, turning to flight the armies of the aliens.” “Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty,” Verse 13. In two striking particulars, this gracious interposition of Heaven is emphatically pointed out. “He made him that *remaineth* to have dominion.” It was not the *strength* of Israel which God employed in crushing the “nobles” and pride of Canaan, it was not by opposing force to force, skill to skill, that Providence decided the contest; but by a scattered, broken remainder; but by a dispirited handful, that durst not trust themselves in the plain against the enemy; but by an unarmed rabble whom Sisera held in contempt, that Jehovah trampled the

glory of Jabin in the dust; as by a cake of barley bread rolling down upon a tent and levelling it with the ground.

To set the divine sovereignty in a still stronger light, Deborah suggests, but not in the spirit of self-confidence, that when God did appear for his people, he did it not, by kindling martial ardour and resentment in manly bosoms, by putting the machine in motion in the usual way; but by creating a new thing in the earth; by endowing a woman with more than manly sagacity and resolution; by making a woman the life and soul of a sinking nation; that God himself might have the undivided praise. “The Lord made me have dominion over the mighty.” Is it not somewhat remarkable, that Deborah is only once described as the *wife* of Lapidoth? whereas Barak is repeatedly, both in history and in song, brought forward as the *son* of such a father. Is it to mark the base degeneracy of Israel at this period? all masculine virtue extinguished, and importance sunk; the only trace of the existence of the man, that he was the husband of such a woman? The repetition of this relation therefore may have been omitted, because it would have reflected reiterated disgrace upon the one, without adding much to, perhaps somewhat detracting from, the glory of the other. Whereas the blazoning of a son’s praise, instead of detracting from, is the most gratifying addition to, a father’s honour.

In the passage which follows, the prophetess goes with a poetical and prophetic enthusiasm into a detail of the distinguishing characters, of the several tribes of Israel, according to the part which they had taken, or neglected to take, in the cause of their country at this trying crisis, which at present I shall simply quote, with a single remark; and then conclude. “And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben there were great

thoughts of heart. Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea-shore, and abode in his breaches. Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardied their lives unto the death in the high places of the field," Verse 15—18. This is the third time that prophetic inspiration has presented us with the discriminating features of the sons of Israel, and of the tribes which descended from them, at three different periods, and in very different situations—Jacob on his dying bed, Moses on the wing to ascend mount Nebo, and Deborah on the defeat of Sisera. The comparative view of Israel at these distant periods seem to me a subject of curious, pleasant and not useless disquisition, and I mean to devote the meditation of a particular evening to it.

The season* arrests us now, and demands a series of reflections suited to winter, and change, and decay, and death. The past rushes upon our memory and affections in an impetuous tide. The future still presents the same impenetrable curtain to our eager eyes. We go on fondly planning; and after a thousand proofs of vanity, return to treasure up for ourselves vexation of spirit. But we shall be relieved at length, and ere long land on that shore where fear and hope are no longer. If permitted to enter on the commencement of another year, we shall endeavour to improve that kind indulgence, by endeavouring to suggest reflections suited to the occasion. If permitted to advance to a second sabbath in a new year, we shall attempt to resume our accustomed pursuits: If to any, this be the last opportunity of the kind, the solemn farewell is now taken. And kind is that Providence which does not always let us know when we are saying "finally farewell;"

* The last day of the year.

which permits the bitterness of death to pass before we are sensible it is come. Wo, wo, wo, to the man who is punished with a foresight of the evil that is coming upon him. The exploits of a Deborah and a Barak now live only in the page of history; their song is now to be found only in a few measured words, whose rhyme is lost, whose sense is obscure, whose spirit is evaporated. But, my friends, we have this day been commemorating* an event which will never sink in oblivion, never spend its force, never lose its importance. We have this day been carrying on, keeping up the song, which the enraptured shepherds of Bethlehem caught two thousand years ago from a choir of the heavenly host, which is ever pleasing, ever new, let us again resume it, and teach it to our children. "Glory, glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Amen. Hallelujah!

* In the participation of the Lord's supper.

HISTORY OF DEBORAH.

LECTURE VI.

They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.—JUDGES v. 20, 21.

IN turning over the hallowed page of inspiration, and contemplating the various revolutions of human affairs which it unfolds, we seem transported to a superior region; we behold the earthly ball rolling round beneath our feet: we witness the birth, the progress, the dissolution of nations; we learn to correct the prejudices of education, and our narrowness of conception; we no longer ignorantly admire, nor superciliously despise our fellow-creatures; we adore the great Father and Lord of all, who “has of one blood formed all nations of men to inhabit upon the face of the whole earth,” and “whose kingdom ruleth over all.” From that elevation, we observe with humble acquiescence and holy joy, the designs of eternal providence, maturing, and executing themselves; the individual passing away, but the species permanent; states and kingdoms changing their form, their spirit, their character; but human nature the same under every government, in every climate, under every sky. We behold regions, and periods, and nations rising

into notice, into eminence, into importance, by the talents, the virtues, the address of one man, of one woman; and returning again to obscurity and insignificance, through a defect of wisdom, of public spirit, of exertion.

The history of perhaps no nation exhibits such striking and instructive variety of character and event, as that of the posterity of Abraham. It is interesting in itself, and it is closely connected with the general interests of mankind. That people, through dispersion of near two thousand years, have preserved an existence. Hated, despised and persecuted by all other nations, they remain unextirpated; a monument at once of the vengeance and of the care of Heaven: and unequivocal intimations, from the oracles of truth, hold them up as the objects of eternal providence, in events of superior magnitude, yet to take place.

We have followed the successive changes which they underwent, with successive emotions of astonishment, exultation, indignation and sorrow. And we find them, at the defeat of Sisera and his host, in a situation highly critical and interesting. The prophetess Deborah in this celebrated song, goes into a comparative delineation of the respective merit and demerit of the several tribes; and thereby enables us to estimate the particular character of each, at different eras of their political existence. Jacob on his death-bed, and Moses on the wing to depart, in his valedictory address, present us with a similar opportunity; of which we are now to avail ourselves, in the two-fold view of extending a little our pittance of knowledge of human nature, and increasing our admiration of, and dependence upon, the divine Providence.

In the dying benediction of Jacob, Judah, his fourth son, and the tribe which should spring from him, make a most conspicuous figure. The spirit of prophecy employs every image expressive of power, greatness, plenteousness and duration, to represent the future eminence and superiority of that tribe. In all the mus-

ters which were made of the people during the forty years wandering in the wilderness, and in the distribution of place and station according to divine appointment, in their encampments and removals, we still find Judah excelling in number and strength, and occupying the post of honour. But Moses takes leave of that tribe, with a very slight degree of notice; and in the song of Deborah their name is not so much as mentioned, nor is any allusion made to any exploit of theirs, in celebrating the triumph of that eventful day. Indeed the spirit and pre-eminence of Judah seems to have been gradually on the decline, from the days of Caleb, who conquered and dispossessed the sons of Anak; till they were revived, maintained and extended under David and Solomon. And, for several centuries, we find this prerogative tribe, which was destined to the lasting honours of royalty and rule, sleeping in oblivion and unimportance with the insignificant tribe of Simeon, which hardly every atchieved any action, or produced any personage worthy of being remembered. Of so much consequence is one man in a tribe, in a nation, in a world.

But the person and tribe the most distinguished in the prophecy of Jacob, and the blessing of Moses, are also the most distinguished in this triumphant anthem, Ephraim, the younger son of Joseph, the beloved son of Jacob, raised by the destination and interposition of high Heaven, to power and precedency over his elder brother. To the exertions of this branch of the house of Joseph, in conjunction with those of Zebulun and Naphtali, the victory now by the blessing of God obtained over the armies of Canaan, was chiefly to be ascribed. The spirit of their father Joshua, dead in so many other of the tribes of Israel, is alive in them, and happily is propitious to the common cause.

A severe censure of the conduct of the two tribes and a half beyond the river, is more than insinuated; it is brought directly forward. They are represented as totally lost to all public spirit, and wrapt up in cold

selfishness and indifference. Jordan was a kind of defence to them from the Canaanitish foe, and the cries of their oppressed brethren beyond the river, are drowned in the more interesting bleatings of their own flocks. The same spirit of selfishness is represented as pervading the tribes who inhabited the sea coasts, Dan and Asher, and who, subsisting by trade, and absorbed by the love of gain, steeled their hearts to the feelings of sympathy and humanity. Drawing their supplies from the ocean, they forget they have a country; and under the influence of one domineering lust, all the better claims of the human heart, are suppressed and silenced. They pursue their merchandize, as the others attended to their sheep farms, regardless what their wretched countrymen meanwhile endured. "For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart. Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea-shore, and abode in breaches," Verse 15—17.

Such is the general view of the state of Israel at this period, which the words of Deborah convey. The import of many of the expressions which the prophetess employs to convey her feelings on this occasion, we pretend not to understand or to explain. Is it any wonder that in a poetical composition upwards of three thousand years old, in a language so little studied, referring to a history of which the outline only is drawn, there should be many things difficult to be understood? This much is evident upon the face of it, that Israel at that unhappy period exhibited a spectacle, bearing but too near a resemblance to what our own times* have seen dreadfully realized. A whole host of foes, a world in arms, combined to work the downfall of a sinful de-

* Great-Britain embroiled with France, Spain, Holland, America, and an armed neutrality.

voted country. Internal discord, the extinction of public virtue, the dominion of bare-faced iniquity—but, the arm of the Lord is revealed, and salvation is wrought.

The picture which the poetess draws of the desperate state of Israelitish affairs is truly affecting; and is a happy preparation for a display of that unexpected and astonishing relief, which had just turned their sorrow into gladness. Judah lulled asleep in listless inaction, without exertion, without existence; a fourth part of the national force, on the other side Jordan, careless, tending their flocks; another fourth devoted to their private traffic; the sword of judgment in the feeble hand of a female; confederated kings threatening their utter extirpation; enemies numerous, “strong and lively, and hating them with a cruel hatred;” what power can dissipate the gathered storm? That power which says to the roaring ocean, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” “They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera,” Verse 20. Behold, all nature engaged in the cause of Israel’s God. The heavenly host first take up the quarrel; angels, legions of “angels that excel in strength:” “the least of whom could wield these elements.” The most powerful and splendid parts of inanimate nature feel the alarm, and join their influence; “the stars in their courses.” The earth quickly hears the heaven; the waters swell and rage; Kishon increased, most probably, by the recent dreadful tempest which had fallen from the air, rises suddenly upon them, and, like the Red Sea of old, swallows up, as in a moment, the enemy and the avenger.

There is a singular force and beauty in the repetition of the name of the river, with the addition of the epithet “ancient.” It is natural for men to value themselves on the antiquity of their country, and its cities. It is the fond term which, in the honest pride and exultation of our hearts, we affix to our own land; it seems to confer additional dignity and importance; we

associate in the idea, the valour and success of former times; we feel our hearts attracted as to a common parent; filial affection and brotherly love revive at the sound. In the enthusiasm of pious and poetical inspiration, she bestows animation and passion on the flood; she represents it as rising in pride and joy, and overflowing its banks, to serve the cause of ancient friends, lying under the rod of insolence and oppression. And the period pathetically closes, with the prophetess, in a single word, apostrophizing herself as the honoured, happy instrument of co-operating with intelligent and animated nature in trampling pride and cruelty into the dust. "O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength."

I have already anticipated much of what I had to say, on the subject of the glowing eulogium which Deborah pronounces on the conduct of "Jael, the wife of Heber." Permit me only to repeat, that in order to our fully adopting the sentiments of the Israelitish poetess, we must be acquainted with many circumstances of the case, which the conciseness of the sacred history enables us not to discover; that there is a singularity in the whole conduct and occasion of the business, which forbids it to be drawn into a precedent, and pleaded in ordinary cases as an example or an excuse; that we are to distinguish carefully betwixt the poetic ardour and enthusiasm of a female bard and patriot, and the calm, unimpassioned praise and censure of sound reason, or the deliberate approbation of the God of truth, mercy and justice. We know certainly that God cannot love nor commend perfidy, cruelty or revenge. But he justly may, and often does employ the outrageous passions of one great offender to punish those of another. And that through ignorance, prejudice, or wilful misconception, the wisest of men are very incompetent judges of the ways and works of the Almighty.

The winding up of this sacred poem, suggests the most satisfactory apology for the conduct of Jael, and accounts at the same time for the warmth of the strains

in which Deborah celebrates that conduct. It is the horrid use which conquerors usually made of victory, to which I allude. The wretched females of the vanquished people fell a prey to the brutal lust of the victors. This was a case so common that “the mother of Sisera and her wise ladies” are represented as so lost to feminine delicacy and compassion as remorselessly to exult in the thought of portioning out the virgins of Israel to Sisera and his soldiers, as the mere instruments of a brutal pleasure; as an article of horrid booty for the lawless plunderer. “The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots? Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself, Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two? to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needle-work, of divers colours of needle-work on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?” Ver. 28, 29, 30. Now, may we not suppose both Jael and Deborah animated with a holy indignation against the intended violators of their sexes modesty and honour, and with a holy joy, on the defeat of their ungracious purpose? May we not innocently suppose a mixture of virtuous female spirit inspiring what the one acted and the other sung? Our pity for the fallen warrior and his untimely inglorious fate, must of course abate, when we consider that a righteous and merciful Providence, by whatever means, shortened a life, and stopped a career which threatened the life, the virtue, the happiness of thousands.

In personifying the character of Sisera’s mother and her attendants, Deborah presents us with a happy imitation of a passage in the song of Moses on the triumphant passage of the Red Sea; where the poet insinuates himself, by a bold figure of eloquence, into the councils of Pharaoh, overhears their formidable reso-

lutions, and in the close of the scene, rejoices in seeing their councils, 'once so much dreaded, turned into foolishness, by the grace and power of Heaven. "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters," Exod. xv. 9, 10. So here, Deborah brings in the matrons of Canaan as anticipating the fruits of victory, prematurely enjoying the triumph of the subjection of the Israelitish damsels to their own pride, and the pleasure of their warriors; and she inspirits the gratitude and joy of her fair countrywomen, by gently hinting at the dreadful hazard which they had run. This too, of course, diminishes our concern for the cruel disappointment which the mother of Sisera endured, looking and looking, from her window, but still looking in vain for him who was never more to return; expecting and expecting that lingering chariot, which the ancient river Kishon had long ere now swept down its stream: flushed with hope, only to make calamity more bitter. And let that hope be for ever blasted, which could be accomplished only by what humanity shudders to think of.

Having thus enjoyed self-gratulation, and called forth the grateful congratulations of her delivered country, and with heroic ardour trampled on disappointed lust, insolence and ambition, she now aims a nobler flight. The world and its transitory interests and employments disappear. The throne of God meets her enraptured eye. Private, personal, national animosity are no more: all, all is lost in the higher unlimited, unchanging interest of the divine glory. "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord." This is but a prophetic enunciation of what needs must be. After one revolution has obliterated another, one mortal interest swallowed another up—after the distinctions of Jew and Gentile, Greek

and Barbarian, bond and free are lost and forgotten, the honours of the divine justice and mercy shall flourish and prevail. They that are afar from him, of whatever other name or description, shall perish; and the workers of iniquity shall be destroyed.

But the pious leader of the heavenly theme, as if unwilling to shut up her song with an idea so gloomy as the awful displeasure of the great God against his adversaries, relieves herself and us, by taking up the more encouraging view of the favour of Jehovah to his friends, and thus she fervently breathes out her soul; “But let them that love him, be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.”

Next to the great Lord of nature himself, who is

————— to us invisible,
Or dimly seen, in these his lowest works.

MILTON.

that glorious creature of his power, the sun, is the most striking and impressive of all objects. And poets of every description have enriched and ennobled their compositions by allusions to the glorious orb of day, “of this great world the eye and soul,” as the brightest inanimate image of Deity here below, the fountain of light, the dispenser of vital warmth, the parent of joy. The inspired sacred writers have likewise happily employed it to represent the most glorious animated image of God in our world, a wise and good man “going from strength to strength;” shining as a light in a dark place; silently, without expectation of return, without upbraiding, in an unceasing revolution of diffusing happiness; aiming at resemblance to his Creator by becoming a god to his fellow-creatures. It is thus that Deborah concludes her song; with a warm effusion of faith, and hope, and desire, that righteousness might abound and increase, that good men might be in succession raised up, each in his day a light to his country, to mankind; “going forth as the sun in his might,” from lustre to still higher lustre, from useful-

ness to usefulness, without diminution and without end. By the same simple but powerful imagery the wise man represents the progress of true goodness; “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” And Wisdom itself by a similar suggestion animates the zeal and supports the industry of those who were to teach his religion to the nations of the earth; “Ye are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

To the whole is affixed an historical note, short indeed, but highly interesting and important; “And the land had rest forty years.” This is the noblest eulogium of Deborah, the most honourable display of her talents and virtues. If there be feelings worthy of envy, they are those of this exalted woman, on reflecting that God had honoured her to restore liberty and peace to her country; and to establish such a system of administration of justice, of civil government, of military discipline, and of religious worship, as preserved the public tranquillity for forty years. How effectually may every individual serve the community! Of what importance, then, is every, the meanest individual! How lasting and how extensive is the influence of real worth! There is one way in which every man may be a public blessing, may become a saviour of his country—by cultivating the private virtues of the man and the Christian.

I proceed to illustrate the female character, its amiableness, usefulness and importance, in persons and scenes of a very different complexion; in the less glaring, but not less instructive history of RUTH, the Moabitess, and Naomi, her mother-in-law; happy to escape the scenes of horror and blood which are the subject of the remainder of the history of the Israelish judges.

HISTORY OF RUTH.

LECTURE VII.

Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-Judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.
—RUTH i. 1—5.

THE perpetual vicissitude that prevails in the system of the universe, and in the conduct of Providence, is adapted to the nature, and conducive to the happiness of man. The succession of day and night, alternate labour and repose, the variations of the changing seasons lend to each, as it returns, its peculiar beauty and fitness. We are kept still looking forward, we are ever hovering on the wing of expectation, rising from

attainment to attainment, pressing on to some future mark, pursuing some yet unpossessed prize. The hireling, supported by the prospect of receiving the evening's reward, cheerfully fulfils the work of the day. The husbandman, without regret, perceives the glory of summer passing away, because he lifts up his eyes and "beholds the fields white unto the harvest;" and he submits joyfully to the painful toil of autumn, in contemplation of the rest and comfort he shall enjoy, when these same fields shall be white with snow. It is hunger that gives a relish to food; it is pain that recommends ease. The value of abundance is known only to those who have suffered want, and we are little sensible what we owe to God for the blessing of health, till it is interrupted by sickness.

The very plagues which mortality is heir to, have undoubtedly their uses and their ends: and the sword may be as necessary to draw off the gross humours of the moral world, as storm and tempest are to disturb the mortal stagnation, and to chase away the poisonous vapours of the natural. Weak short-sighted man is assuredly unqualified to decide concerning the ways and works of infinite wisdom; but weak, labouring, wretched man may surely repose unlimited confidence in infinite goodness.

During the dreadful times when there was no king in Israel, the whole head was so sick, the whole heart so faint, the whole mass so corrupted, that an ocean of blood must be drained off, before it can be restored to soundness again. Not only one rotten limb, but the whole body is in danger of perishing, and nothing but a painful operation can save it. The skilful, firm, but gentle hand of Providence takes up the instrument, cuts out the disease, and then tenderly binds up the bleeding wounds. Relieved from the distress of beholding brother lifting up the spear against brother, from hearing the shouts of the victor, and the groans of the dying, we retire to contemplate and to partake

of the noiseless scenes of domestic life; to observe the wholesome sorrows and guiltless joys of calmness and obscurity; to join in the triumphs of sensibility, and to solace in the soft effusions of nature; to “smile with the simple, and feed with the poor.”

The little history on which we are now entering, is one of those which every where, and at all seasons, must afford pleasure and instruction. It is a most interesting display of ordinary life, of simple manners, of good and honest hearts; of the power of friendship and the rewards of virtue. It forms an important link in the chain of Providence, and the history of redemption. There is perhaps no story that has been wrought into so many different forms, transfused into so many different languages, accommodated to so many different situations, as the history of Ruth. It is felt, from the cottage up to the palace, by the rustic and the courtier, by the orphan gleaner in the field, and the king's daughter. The man of taste delights in it on account of the artless structure, elegant diction, and judicious arrangement of the tender tale. The friend of virtuous sensibility delights in it, for the gentle emotions which it excites, and the useful lessons which it inculcates. The pious soul rejoices in it, from the enlarged, the instructive, the consolatory views of the divine providence which it unfolds. The inquiring and devout christian prizes it, as standing in connexion with the ground of his faith, and contributing to strengthen the evidence, and explain the nature of “those things wherein he has been instructed,” and on which he rests for salvation. Happy the man, who, possessing all these qualities, shall peruse and employ it as a corrector and guide to the imagination, as a support to the spirit, as a light to the understanding, a monitor to the conscience, a guard to the affections, and a faithful instructor to the heart.

The particular era of this story is not marked by the sacred penman, neither has he been directed to affix his

name to his precious little work. In general it was not in the times of boisterous anarchy and wild uproar, that Boaz cut down his barley, and Ruth gleaned after the reapers. The fruits of the field were protected to the owner by lawful authority, and justice was administered by the elders in the gate.

If we consider that the life of man was now reduced to the common standard, that David was the fourth in order of succession from Boaz, and allow thirty or thirty-five years to be the medium standard of distance from one generation to another, the marriage of Boaz with Ruth, will be thrown upon the short administration of his townsman Ibzan, the successor of Jephtha, of which we have only a brief account: "And after him, Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel," Judges xii. 8.

Samuel is generally understood to have written both this book and the preceding, and thereby to have preserved the historical series of events from Joshua to himself, *almost* unbroken; and also the genealogical deduction of succession down to David, in whom the royal line of the house of Judah commenced, *altogether* uninterrupted. And while we behold Rahab the harlot, a woman of Jericho, and Ruth the Moabitess, not only admitted to the rank of mothers in Israel, but mothers of a race of kings, mothers in the line of "Messiah the Prince," we are admonished, as Peter was long afterward, on a different occasion, "not to call that common or unclean which God hath purified."

Israel was now enjoying the blessing of good government, but the land is visited with a calamity which no sagacity of government could foresee or prevent, and no human power remove—with famine. Bethlehem itself, the house of bread, so called from the fertility of the circumjacent fields, sinks under the pressure of this sore evil, and Elimelech, one of the chiefs of his tribe, is, like the most illustrious of his ancestors, driven to seek subsistence in a strange land.

Every land, according to its place on the globe, has

its peculiar climate, soil, production. One is watered by the clouds of heaven, another by an inundation of the waters of the earth. Here the rain descends according to no fixed law, either as to season or quantity, there it is measured to a drop, and timed to a moment. On the regularity or uncertainty of these distributions by the hand of nature, or the intervention of Providence, depend the comfort, the very sustentation of human life; on them depends all the variation of vegetable produce, as to plenty or scarcity, as to greatness, wholesomeness, pleasantness, and their contraries. Hence the same country is one year as the garden of God for beauty and abundance, and the next as the waste howling wilderness; Canaan now flows with milk and honey, and gives bread to the full, and anon eats up its inhabitants. We hear an offended and a merciful God, by the mouth of the same prophet, reproving and threatening human thoughtlessness and ingratitude in relation to this interesting subject, in these glowing terms: "She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness. And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, of which she said, These are my rewards which my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them." And thus relents the God of grace towards penitent returning children, "I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy on her that had not obtained mercy." Such is the mys-

terious scale of both mercy and judgment. Thus universal nature is combined in one firm league to oppress and confound God's adversary. Thus every creature, every event unites in preserving the existence and promoting the happiness of his repenting, dutiful, obedient children.

Elimelech seeks and finds refuge in Moab, for "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof;" and he has given commandment, "Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab;" and that one word disarms in an instant national animosity, represses the rage of the lion, quenches the violence of fire. The fugitive of Beth-lehem-Judah finds kindness and protection among inveterate enemies; Daniel sleeps secure amongst the fiercest of the savage tribes; and the three children of the captivity walk unhurt in the midst of the flaming furnace.

We see, at first, nothing but one of those instances which every day occur, of the sad reverses to which individuals, families, states are liable; the downfall and distress of an ancient and reputable house struggling with penury, and forced into exile; but we soon discover, that the eternal eye is fixed on a nobler object, that the hand of omnipotence is preparing the materials and laying the foundation of a more magnificent fabric; that infinite wisdom is bringing low the royal house of Bethlehem, only to restore it with greater splendour.

We have before us at once the cure of pride and of despair. Behold, O man of an hundred ancestors, and of an hundred thousand acres, behold Elimelech, the son of Abraham, poor and despised; the head of the tribe of Judah, a stranger in a strange land, existing through sufferance, supplied through foreign bounty; and remember by what a brittle tenure thy privileges and possessions are held. Consider, child of adversity, whom no man knows, whom no one regards, consider yonder neglected, reduced, extinguished family, and behold from the ashes of the expiring phoenix, an im-

mortal offspring arising, whose flight neither time nor space can limit, and feel thine own importance, and aim only at high things, and trust in omnipotence for the execution of its own eternal purpose.

In a country and among a people where names were not mere arbitrary sounds, but conveyed a meaning connected with character, with history, with expectation, those of Elimelech, "my God is king," and of his wife Naomi, "the pleasant one," from their peculiar import, must have a reference to certain circumstances in their history which are not recorded. The former might be dictated by the spirit of prophecy, and be significant, without the intention of them who imposed, or of him who bore it, of the future greatness to which the family, through the favour of Heaven, should arise, in the persons of David, of Solomon, and that long succession of princes which finally centered, and was absorbed, in the person of Christ; David's son, yet David's Lord. The particulars of his own story that have reached us, are too few and too general to admit of our discerning any reference or application of his name to his character, office or condition: but we know enough of the character and history of Naomi to justify the suitableness of the appellation to her person, dispositions and final attainments.

In the disasters which befall, and the successes which attend certain families and individuals, we behold an apparent partiality of distribution that confounds and overwhelms us. Death enters into that house, passes from couch to couch, spares neither root nor branch; the insatiate fiend never says it is enough. Whatever that poor man attempts, be the scheme ever so judiciously formed, ever so diligently prosecuted, uniformly fails; the winds, as they change, the stars in their courses fight against him. The very mistakes of his neighbour turn out prosperously, his sails are always full, his children multiply, his wealth increases, his mountain stands strong. Is God therefore unwise,

capricious, partial, or unjust? No, but we are blind, contracted, presumptuous. We can discern, can comprehend, only here and there a little fragment of his works, we are gone before the event has explained itself; it requires the capacity, the eternity of God himself to take in the mighty whole of his plan.

The house of Elimelech exhibits an affecting instance of the inequality we have been mentioning. The sad account of famine, of banishment, of degradation, of dependence, is at length closed with death. Disease of body, co-operating with distress of mind, probably the effect of it, shortens his days, and terminating his own worldly misery, dreadfully aggravates the woes of the unhappy survivors. Wretched mother, left to struggle alone with poverty, solitude, danger, and neglect: far from friends, encompassed with enemies, loaded with the charge of two fatherless children, not more the objects of affection, than the sources of anxiety and care! While Elimelech lived, penury was hardly felt as a burden; in exile thou wert always at home; secluded from society, the conversation of one still dispelled the gloom. Thy sons afforded only delight, because that delight was participated in by him who had a common interest with you in them: but all is now changed, every load is accumulated seven-fold, every comfort is embittered, every prospect is clouded: the past presents nothing but regret; the future discloses nothing but despair.

She seems to have given up, at this period, all thoughts of returning to her native country, and, making a virtue of dire necessity, attempts to naturalize her family in the land of Moab, by allying her sons, through marriage, to the inhabitants of the country. The sense of the loss she has sustained, gradually yields to the lenient hand of time, and to the sweet hope of seeing the house of her beloved husband built up, and his name revived in the persons of his grand-children. Alas, what is the hope of man! the flatterer has been

only decoying her into a greater depth of wo; her two remaining props sink, one after another, into the dust; all that the eyes desired is taken away with stroke upon stroke; and, to fill up the measure of a mother's wretchedness, both her sons die childless, and hope expires with them. Now she is a widow indeed, and exhausted nature shrinks under the pressure.

It is the opinion of many interpreters, that the premature death of the young men, was a judgment from heaven to punish their illegal intermarriage with strange and idolatrous women. It becomes not man to judge; and we know that God executeth only righteous judgment; and in wrath still remembers mercy.

Thus in three short lines the sacred historian has delivered a tragic tale that comes home to the bosom of every one that possesses a spark of sensibility. It is a domestic story; it represents scenes which may, which do happen every day. It admonishes every one in how many points he is vulnerable, how defenceless he is against the thunderbolts of Heaven. It awfully displays the evil of sin, and the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of man. If such be the temporal effects of his vengeance, how bitter must be the cup which his just displeasure mingles for incorrigible offenders, in a state of final retribution! How pleasing to reflect that trials of this sort do not always flow from anger, that they are the wholesome severity of a father, that they can aim at producing real good, that they in the issue really "yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness." The darkness of night at length yields to the glorious orb of day, the shadow of death is turned into the morning, and the desolate is as she who hath an husband.

This makes way for the introduction of the heroine of this eventful history; and we become interested in her from the very first moment. The Jewish writers, to heighten our respect for Ruth, perhaps from a pitiful desire to exalt their own ancestry, make her the

daughter of a king of Moab, and as they are never timorous in making assertions, or forming conjectures on such occasions, they tell you her father was Eglon whom Ehud slew. It is hardly probable that a prince of that country would have given his daughter in marriage to a needy adventurer who had banished himself from his country through necessity. But of little importance is it, whether she was born a princess or not. Nature has adorned her with qualities such as are not always to be found in the courts of kings; qualities which best adorn high birth, and which ennoble obscurity and indigence; fidelity and attachment; a soul capable of fond respect for departed worth, and living virtue: magnanimity to sacrifice every thing the heart holds dear, to decency, friendship, and religion; magnanimity to encounter, without repining, painful toil and humiliating dependence, in fulfilling the duties of gratitude, humanity, and piety. How eloquent is she when she speaks, how great when she says nothing, how transcendently exalted in all she thinks, speaks and acts! With what divine art, shall I say, is she introduced in the sacred drama? After we have been melted into pity by the calamity of Naomi's family, and seen the widowed mourner sinking under wave upon wave; and the prospect of progeny, the last darling hope of an Israelitish matron, rudely torn from her, lo an angel in the form of a damsel of Moab, a mourner and a widow like herself, appears to comfort her, and makes her to know by sweet experience that he, that she, has not lost all, who has found a kind and faithful friend. What is the sound of the trumpet, and a long train of mute and splendid harbingers, compared to the simple preparation of unaffected nature! Let us wait her approach in silent expectation; and muse on what is past.

—Behold one generation of men goeth and another cometh; one planet arising as another sets, every human advantage balanced by its corresponding incon-

venience, every loss compensated by comfort that grows out of it.

—Behold the purpose of the eternal Mind maintaining its ground amidst all the tossings and tempests of this troubled ocean, triumphing over opposition, serving and promoting itself by the wrath of man and the malice of hell, out of darkness rising into lustre, “out of weakness made strong,” by the energy of the great first cause, acquiring life, vigour and prosperity from the extinction of means, from the destruction and death of secondary causes.

Attend to the great leading object of divine revelation, to which all refer, to which all are subservient, in which all are absorbed and lost. I will make mention of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; of Moses and the prophets; of Boaz and Ruth. “I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me; behold Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia: this man was born there; and of Zion it shall be said, This man was born in her: and the Highest himself shall established her. The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, That this man was born there.” May our names be written in the Lamb’s book of life, among the living in Jerusalem!

The introduction of these personages and events, one after another, were remote steps of the preparation of the gospel of peace. And every person now born into the church of Christ, and every event now taking place in the administration of human affairs, is a little space in the great scale of eternal Providence, and a gradual preparation for the final consummation of all things. Let “thy kingdom come,” O God! Let Satan’s kingdom be destroyed; let the kingdom of grace be advanced, ourselves and others brought into, and preserved in it, and let the kingdom of glory be hastened! Amen!

HISTORY OF RUTH.

LECTURE VIII.

And they lifted up their voice, and wapt again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.—RUTH i. 14—18.

THE calm, untumultuous, unglaring scenes of private life, afford less abundant matter for the pen of the historian, than intrigues of state, senatorial contention, or the tremendous operations of the tented field, but they supply the moralist and the teacher of religion with more pleasing, more ample, and more generally interesting topics of useful information, and salutary instruction. What princes are, what statesmen meditate, what heroes atchieve, is rather an object of curiosity than of utility. They never can become examples to the bulk of mankind. It is when they have de-

scended from their public eminence, when they have retired to their private and domestic station, when the potentate is lost in the man, that they become objects of attention, patterns for imitation, or beacons set up for admonition and caution.

For the same reason, the meek, the modest, the noiseless exhibition and exercise of female excellence, occupy a smaller space in the annals of human nature than the noisy, bustling, forensic pursuits and employments of the other sex. But when feminine worth is gently drawn out of the obscurity which it loves, and advantageously placed in the light which it naturally shuns, O how amiable, how irresistible, how attractive it is! A wise and good woman shines, by not seeking to shine; is most eloquent when she is silent, and obtains all her will, by yielding, by submission, by patience, by self-denial.

Scripture, as it excels in every thing, so it peculiarly excels in delineating and unfolding the female character, both in respect of the quantity exhibited, and of the delicacy, force and effect of the design. We have already seen this exemplified, in a variety of instances, in the dignified conjugal attachment and respect, in the matron-like, conscious, impatient superiority of Sarah—in the maternal partiality, eagerness and address of Rebecca—in the jealous discontent and impatience of Rachael—in the winning condescension, and the melting commiseration of Pharaoh's daughter—in the patriotic ardour, the prophetic elevation, the magisterial dignity of Deborah the wife of Lapidoth—in the unrelenting firmness, and the daring, enterprising spirit of Jael, the wife of Heber.

Female vice and worthlessness are delineated on the sacred page with equal skill, truth and justice, from the insolence of Hagar, and the treachery of Delilah, down to the implacable vengeance of Herodias, and the insatiate cruelty of her accursed daughter.

Three more female portraits are now presented for

our inspection, and our improvement; all expressive of characters essentially different, all possessing features of striking resemblance, all exhibiting qualities which create and keep alive an interest, all copies from nature, all pourtrayed by the hand of him who knows what is in man.

We have witnessed the wretchedness and sympathized in the sorrows of Naomi, *my pleasant one*, reduced from rank and fulness to obscurity and indigence, banished from her country and friends, a stranger in a strange land, robbed of her husband, bereaved of her children; having no protector save Heaven, no hope or refuge but in the peaceful grave. Behold the thrice widowed mourner bowing the head, and hiding the face in silent grief. She is dumb, she opens not her mouth, because the Lord hath done it. The miserable partners of her wo only increase and embitter it. Two young women, like herself widows, childless, comfortless; fondly attached to her, and tenderly beloved by her, because fondly attached to the memory of their husbands; but their mutual affection rendered a punishment, not a pleasure, by the pressure of poverty and the bitterness of neglect. At length she is roused from the stupefaction of grief by tidings from her country, from her dear native city, and a ray of hope dispels the gloom of her soul. She “hears in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.”

In the wisdom and goodness of Providence, there is a healing balm provided for every wound. The lenient hand of time soothes the troubled soul to peace; the agitation of the mind at last wearies it out, and lulls it asleep, and its weakness becomes its strength. Though in misery we cleave to the love of life, and having lost our comforts one after another, we are still enabled to look forward with fond expectation to a new source of joy. And when all temporal hope is extinguished, and reluctantly given up, the spirit asserts its

own immortality, and rests in hope beyond the grave. Naomi is reduced to a melancholy, mortifying alternative; of continuing a poor, deserted exile in the land of Moab, or of returning to Bethlehem-Judah, stripped of all her wealth, all her glory; to be an object, at best, of pity, perhaps of contempt. On this however she resolves, flattering herself that change of place and change of objects may alleviate her distress.

The two young Moabitesses, in uniting themselves to men of Israel, had renounced their own kindred and country, perhaps their native gods; and therefore listen with joy to the proposal of their mother-in-law, to return to Canaan. It is the more pleasing to observe this union of sentiment and affection, that the relation in question is seldom found favourable to cordiality and harmony. It furnishes a presumptive proof of the goodness of all the three, and they had indeed a most mournful bond of union among themselves—common loss, common misery; and the heart seems to have felt and acknowledged the ties which alliance had formed and the hand of death had rivetted.

Behold then the mother and her daughters turning their back on the painfully pleasing scenes of joys and sorrows past, unattended, unprotected, unbefriended, disregarded, as sad a retinue as ever wandered from place to place. They are hardly in motion from their place, when Naomi, penetrated with a lively sense of gratitude for friendship so generous and disinterested, overwhelmed with the prospect of the still greater misery in which these dutiful young women were about to involve themselves, from their love to her, and unwilling to be outdone in kindness, earnestly entreats them to return home again, urging upon them every consideration that reason, that affection, that prudence could suggest, to induce them to separate from a wretch so friendless and forlorn, so helpless, so hopeless as herself. To suffer alone is now all the consolation she either expects or seems to wish; the destitute condition

of these sisters in affliction, is now her heaviest burthen. Indeed the situation of these three female pilgrims, has in it something wonderfully pathetic and interesting. There they are upon the road, on foot, with all the weakness, ignorance, timidity, uncertainty and irresolution of their sex; not knowing which way to bend their course, exposed to the craft, violence or insult of every one they met; sinking under the recollection of what they had endured, shrinking from the apprehension of what might yet be before them: attempting to comfort each other, and in that, every one seeking some slender consolation for herself. Think on the failure of bread, on the failure of money, on the approaches of night, on the natural terrors and dangers of darkness, on the savageness of wild beasts, and the more formidable savageness of wicked men. Think on the unkindness and indifference of an unfeeling world, and the darker frowns of angry Heaven. We are disposed to weep while we reflect on Jacob, a fugitive from his father's house, composing his head to rest upon a pillow of stone, under the canopy of the open sky; at reflecting on Joseph, torn from his father's embrace, sold into slavery, cast into a dungeon; but I find here something infinitely more deplorable. They were men, flushed with youthful spirits, with youthful hope: the vigour of their minds had not been broken down by the iron hand of affliction, their prospects were enlivened with the promises and visions of the Almighty; but these unhappy wanderers have drunk deep of the cup of adversity; their society is worse than solitude, despair hangs over all their future prospects. Stand still and shed the tear of compassion over them, ye daughters of affluence, prosperity and ease, who start at a shadow, who scream at the sight of a harmless mouse, who tremble at the rustling of a leaf shaken by the wind; ye who never knew the heart of a stranger, the keen biting of the wind of heaven, the stern aspect of hunger, the surly blow, or scornful

look of pride and cruelty. Or rather, weep over them, ye whose wounds are still bleeding, to whom wearisome days and nights have been appointed, who by the experience of misery, have learned to pity and to succour the miserable. May the God of mercy, the friend of the orphan, the judge of the widow, the refuge of the distressed, have mercy upon them, and conduct them in safety to their desired haven.

Which shall we most admire, the generosity and disinterestedness of the mother, or the steadiness, spirit and resolution of the daughters? How pleasurable is strife of a certain kind, the strife of good will, of magnanimity, of gratitude, of piety, of self-denial! The language, the sentiments, are the language and sentiments of nature, they flow from the heart, and reach the heart. “And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother’s house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find rest each of you, in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them. And they lifted up their voice, and wept,” Verse 8, 9.

The good woman herself admits that enough of respect has been paid, to filial and conjugal tenderness; she wishes and prays, as a recompense for their kindness to the living, and devotedness to the memory of the dead, more lasting and more auspicious connexions with husbands of their own country. She proposes not, recommends not the affected, constrained, involuntary retirement and sequestration of prudish, squeamish virtue; and they, on their part, assume no unnatural airs of immortal grief; they form no flimsy suspicious vows of undeviating, unalterable attachment; make no clamorous, unmeaning, deceptive protestation of love extinguished, and never to be rekindled, the pitiful artifice of little minds to flatter themselves, and catch the admiration of others. How much more

emphatical the silent, unprotesting reply of Orpah and Ruth! "She kissed them; and they lifted up their voice and wept." What charming eloquence is heard, is seen, is felt in those tears! Have those lovely damsels less regard for their departed lords, are they more eager to form new alliances, that they say nothing? I cannot believe it. Noisy grief is quickly over, soon spends itself. Sincerity seldom calls in the aid of exclamation, vehemence and vows; but dubious, staggering fidelity is glad to support itself with the parade of wo, and the pomp of declamation.

Their persevering, determined, unprotecting friendship, but endears them the more to their venerable parent, and inclines her the more powerfully to resist their inclination, and prevent the sacrifice which they were disposed to make; and again she has recourse to more earnest and tender expostulation, resolved to offer up a noble sacrifice to maternal tenderness in her turn. "And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have a husband also to-night, and should also bear sons; would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes, that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me," Verse 11—13.

What sweet touches of unsophisticated nature press upon the heart, in perusing this address! beyond the pomp and power of art to reach. Who is not melted at hearing the undissembled wailings of a good and honest mind, mourning for others, not itself: calmly surrendering its own interest in the joys of life, but anxiously desires to procure and preserve them for those whom she loved as her own soul; nobly resigning that cordial of cordials, virtuous friendship, when

it could not be enjoyed but to the detriment of those who felt and expressed it; composed to the prospect and suffering of solitary anguish, provided her amiable children were restored to the rank, affluence and comfort which they so well deserved. How poor and contemptible are the contentions for precedency and pre-eminence, the emulation of fortune and dress, the rage of admiration and conquest, compared to this! How pleasant is it to see an humble fortune dignified and supported by generosity and greatness of mind!

The touchstone is now applied to the affection of the two sisters, and their characters and merits are finally disclosed. Orpah suffers herself to be persuaded; with regret we behold her resolution overcome; we behold her separating from her mother-in-law, with the valedictory kiss of peace, and returning to her country and her gods; and we hear of her no more. But Ruth cleaves to her new choice, unmoved by the example of her sister, or the entreaties of her mother, she persists in her purpose; the desertion of Orpah only knits her heart the faster to her adopted parent, and in words far sweeter than the nightingale's song, she breathes out her unalterable resolution to live and to die with her. How could Naomi find in her heart to make another attempt to shake off so lovely a companion? How delighted must she have been, in yielding the triumph of kindness to a pleader so irresistible! "And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me," Verse 16, 17.

The mother is every way outdone, overcome, and contends no longer—to persist farther had been cruelty, not friendship; and thus mutual sympathy and deliberate choice have, under the direction of all-ruling Pro-

vidence, formed an union dearer than the ties of interest, or even the bonds of nature know: and thus the same breath which extinguishes the fainter spark, blows up the stronger into a purer, brighter flame, and thus the God who has all hearts and all events in his hand, ever rears a refuge for the miserable, provides a remedy against despair, and extracts a precious essence from calamity, which operates its own cure. "When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her," Verse 18. And thus Ruth stands without an equal, without a rival. And how has she gained the glorious superiority over a sister? By a lofty tone and an overbearing spirit, by the poisoned whisper, and the dark insinuation; by smoothness of forehead and malignity of heart? No, but by perseverance in well-doing, and adherence to rectitude; by modest firmness, and heart-affecting simplicity; by undissembled affection and unaffected piety. O goodness, how pure, how sincere, how satisfactory are the honours which crown thy head, and dilate thy heart!

It is impossible to tire in contemplating an object so transcendently excellent. In that fair form all the feminine virtues and graces love to reside. We have pointed out some of them; let us meditate for a moment, on that which is the crown and glory of all the rest. Estimable for her conjugal fidelity, and filial attachment; great in her voluntary renunciation of the world, and patient submission to poverty, hardship, and contempt; how superlatively great, how supremely estimable does she appear, arrayed in the robe of unfeigned piety, and triumphant faith in God! The world may perhaps condemn her for preferring the society, country, and prospects of so poor a woman as Naomi to the friendship of her own kindred, the possessions of her native home, the allurements of present ease and comfort. Had she conferred with flesh and blood, how very different had the decision been! But

the same divine principle which caused Moses to “refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter;” and which taught him “to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt,” determined this amiable creature to withdraw from the companions of her youth, the protection of her father’s house, and the religious worship of her ancestors; and to follow a destitute forlorn widow from country to country, to cast her subsistence upon the care of Providence, and to look for her reward beyond the grave.

Observe these distinct qualities of the religious principle by which she was actuated.

I. It was *deliberate*, the result of reflection, comparison and choice, not the prejudice of education, the determination of self-interest, nor the momentary effect of levity and caprice. Her prejudices, her partialities, her worldly interests were all clearly on the other side. The idolatrous rites of Moab were fascinating to a young mind, not yet beyond a taste for pleasure; the aspect of the religion of Canaan was rather ungainly and forbidding, and to adopt it implied the renunciation of all that the heart naturally holds dear. When she therefore thus solemnly affirms, “Your God shall be my God,” it is in effect saying, “I have counted the cost, I know whom I have believed. I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back. I have subscribed with my hand to the God of Jacob. Blessed be the day that I came into connexion with an Israelitish family. It has indeed cost me many tears, pierced through my heart with many sorrows, it is banishing me from my dear native clime, from the endearments of parental affection, from ease, honour and abundance, driving me among strangers, exposing me to struggle with uncertainty, anxiety, necessity, neglect and scorn; but my resolution is fixed: none of these things move me; every sacrifice, every loss, every disgrace is infinitely

more compensated by having Israel's God for my God." Which leads to observe a

Second feature of Ruth's religious character; was it *steady* and *persevering*. It might at first have been mere respect for the opinions and practice of the husband of her youth; the mere decency that suited an adopted daughter of Israel; but this had long ceased to be a motive; had it amounted but to this, it had been buried in the grave of her departed lord; but what was at first complaisance and decency, grows up into inquiry, inquiry produces hesitation, and more serious inquiry, this improves into conviction, and conviction is followed by a determination not to be moved or shaken, and she continues steadfast to the end. Her constancy, it must be allowed, was put to severe trials. Orpah has gone back, Naomi carries her expostulation up to importunity, I had almost said, to downright violence; the difficulties and hardships of the way were increasing, not diminishing upon her. Had not "the heart been established by grace," so many, such accumulated discouragements, must have subdued the ardour of her spirit, and sent her back after her sister; but she has put her hand to the plough, and must not look back. Observe, she does not attempt to reason, does not oppose argument to argument, but, "being fully persuaded in her own mind," adheres firmly to her point, and argues irresistibly by not arguing at all, and prevails by entreaty. See that your cause be good, my fair friend, persist in it, prosecute it thus, and be assured of the victory.

III. Observe finally, as Ruth's religious principle was deliberate, was steady and persevering, so it was *lively, efficacious, practical*. We hear nothing of the prattle of piety, nothing of the violence of a young and a female proselyte, no question of doubtful disputation introduced, about places and modes of worship, about Jerusalem and this mountain, nothing of the religion that floats merely in the head, and bubbles upon the

tongue; no, her religion is seen, not heard, it “works by love, it purifies the heart, it overcomes the world.” It offers up a grand sacrifice unto God, the body and spirit, affection and substance, youth, beauty, parentage, the pleasures and the pride of life. Let me see a single instance of this sort, and I will believe the convert more in earnest, than by exhibiting all the wordy zeal of a thousand polemics.

Indeed it is by action that this truly excellent woman expresses all her inward feelings. Her affection to her husband is not heard in loud lamentation over his tomb, but in cleaving to all that remained of him, his mother, his people, his country and his God. Her affection to his mother is not expressed in the set phrase of condolence and compliment; but in adhering to her when all had forsaken her, in labouring for her subsistence, in submitting to her counsel: and her reverence for his God is manifested not merely in adopting the language and observing the rites of Canaan, but in relinquishing for ever, and abhorrence, the gods beyond the flood, and every thing connected with their abominable rites.

Every circumstance of the case and character under review, administers plain and important instruction. And, being a case in ordinary life, Ruth stands forth a pattern and instructor to young persons, in particular, whose situation may resemble her own.

Young woman, you may have married in a strange family. You have, of course, adopted the kindred, the pursuits, the friendships, and to a certain degree, the religion of your husband. It is your duty, and you will find it your interest, to let him and his connexions know, from your general deportment, that you are satisfied with the choice which you have made. Learn to give up your own prejudices in favour of country, of parentage, of customs, of opinions. Unless where the sacred rights of conscience are concerned, deem no sacrifice too great for the maintenance

or restoration of domestic peace. As far as lieth in you, "whither he goeth, go thou; and lodge where he lodgeth; let his people be thy people, and his God thy God." You will thereby preserve and secure his affection; you will harmonise family interests and intimacies, instead of disturbing them: if yours be the better religion, this is the way to bring over to it the man of no religion, or of an erroneous one; and if it be the worse, your relinquishing it, on conviction, will be at once a token of conjugal affection, a mark of good understanding, and a reasonable service toward God.

Have you had, in early life, the calamity of becoming a widow? It is a distressing, a delicate situation. It calls for every maxim of prudence, every counsel of friendship, every caution of experience, every support of piety. If you are a mourner indeed, you are already guarded against affectation; you will find rational and certain relief in attending to, and performing the duties of your station. You will neither seek a hasty cure of sorrow by precipitately plunging into the world, nor attempt an unnatural prolongation of it by affected retirement and sequestration. The tongue will utter no rash vows; the pang of separation will dictate no ensnaring resolutions; the will of Providence will be respected, obeyed, followed. Respect for the dead is best expressed by dutifulness to the living.

You have before you an useful example of firmness blended with female softness, of resolution heightened and adorned by sensibility. Lately, like Ruth, you had one who thought and acted for you; one who joyfully endured the burden and heat of the day, that your body and mind might enjoy repose. But now necessity is laid upon you. You must awake and arise to think and act for yourself. And here, as in every case, Nature has annexed the recompense to the duty. The mental powers are enfeebled, and at length destroyed, by disuse and inaction. Exertion invigorates

the mind, and composes by directing it. The listlessness of indolence undermines health; the activity of useful employment is the simplest and most infallible medicine for bodily complaints. And the most direct road to an honourable and happy second connexion, probably, is, to guard carefully against all vehement expression of either inclination or aversion, on the subject.

All these, however, are merely lessons of prudence, adapted to the life that now is; and, however important in themselves, unless aided and supported by a higher principle, will constitute, at most, the decent kinswoman, or the respectable sufferer. In Ruth we have this higher principle, likewise beautifully exemplified—rational, modest, unaffected piety. True religion sits well on persons of either sex, and in all situations; but its aspect is peculiarly amiable in a female form, and in particular situations. Youth, beauty and sorrow united, present a most interesting object—a daughter weeping at a parent's tomb; a mother mourning over “the babe that milked her;” and “refusing to be comforted;” a widow embracing the urn which contains the ashes of the husband of her youth—in all their affliction we are afflicted, we cannot refrain from mingling our tears with theirs. Let religion be infused into these lovely forms, and mark how the interest rises, how the frame is embellished, how the deportment is ennobled! The eye of that dutiful child is turned upward, her heart is delivered from oppression, her trembling lips pronounce, “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.” “My Father who art in heaven!” The mother withdraws from the breathless clay, reconciled to the stroke which bereaved her, “goes her way, and eats bread, and her countenance is no more sad,” for her Maker has said to her, Why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? Am not I better to thee than ten sons?”

The widowed mourner “gives her mortal interest up; and makes her God her all.”

Young woman, whatever thy condition may be; whether thou art in thy father’s house, or married to an husband; at home, or in a strange land; in society, or solitude; followed or neglected; be this thy monitor, this thy guide, this thy refuge—“The love of God shed abroad in thy heart;” “the fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom;” “the peace of God which passeth all understanding.” However easy, gentle, flexible, complying, in other respects, where your religious principle, where the testimony of a good conscience, where your duty to your Creator are concerned, be firm and resolute, “be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” Thus shall youth be guarded, and beauty adorned; thus shall society be sweetened, and solitude cheered; thus shall prosperity be sanctified, and adversity soothed; thus shall life, even to old age and decay, be rendered useful and respectable; and thus shall death and the grave be stripped of all that is terrible in them.

HISTORY OF RUTH.

LECTURE IX.

So they went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me? So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in law with her, which returned out of the country of Moab. And they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley-harvest.—RUTH i. 19—22.

OF the calamities to which human life is exposed, a few only are to be accounted real evils: the rest are imaginary and fantastical. Want of health is real wo; but what proportion do the hours of pain and sickness bear to the years of ease and comfort and joy? Want of bread is real distress, but it is very seldom the work of nature, and therefore ought not, in justice, to be introduced into the list of the unavoidable ills which flesh is heir to. The loss of friends is a sore evil, but even wounds from this sharp-pointed weapon are closed at length, by the gentle hand of time, and the tender consolations of religion.

Whence then the unceasing, the universal murmurings of discontent, of desire, of impatience? Men fix their standard of felicity too high; and all they have attained goes for nothing, because one darling object is still out of reach; or they groan and sigh under the weight of some petty disaster, which scarce deserves the name; while ten thousand substantial blessings are daily falling on their heads unnoticed, unacknowledged, unenjoyed. Compare, O man, thy possessions with thy privations, compare thy comforts with thy deserts, compare thy condition with thy neighbour's, consider how far, how very far thy state is on this side *worst*, and learn to give God thanks. Repine not that some wants are unsupplied, that some griefs are endured, that some designs have been frustrated, while so many unmerited good things are left, while hope remains, while there is recourse to Heaven. Behold these two forlorn wanderers, widowed, friendless, destitute, and cease from thy complaints, and stretch out thy hand to succour the miserable.

In the glorious strife of affection, Ruth has nobly prevailed. Impelled by the fond recollection of endearments past, and now no more—prompted by filial duty and tenderness to the mother of her choice, attracted, animated, upheld by the powers and prospects of religion, she composedly yields up her worldly all, takes up her cross, and bears it patiently along from Moab to Beth-lehem-Judah. The history is silent on the subject of their journey. It is easy to conceive the anxieties, the terrors, the fatigues, the sufferings of female travellers, on a route of at least a hundred and twenty miles across the Arnon, across the Jordan, over mountains, through solitudes, without a protector, without a guide, without money. But that God who is the friend of the destitute, and the refuge of the miserable, that God who was preparing for them infinitely more than they could ask, wish or think, guides and guards them by the way, and brings them at length to their desired resting place.

These are not the only female pilgrims whom the sacred page has presented to our view, advancing by slow and painful stages to Bethlehem of Judah. Upwards of thirteen hundred years after this period, we behold a still more illustrious traveller, and in circumstances still more delicate, on the road from Nazareth of Galilee, to her native city; but not to take possession of the inheritance of her fathers, not to repose in the lap of ease and indulgence, not to deposit the anxieties of approaching child-birth in the bosom of a fond and sympathizing parent; but to know the heart of a stranger, to feel the bitterness of unkindness and neglect; so friendless that not a door would open to receive her, so poor that she cannot purchase the accommodations of an inn, overtaken by nature's inevitable hour, "she brings forth her first-born son in a stable, and lays him in the manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." But through such humiliating circumstances of meanness and poverty, what a display of glory and magnificence was the arm of Jehovah preparing! What an important station do the simple annals of these poor women hold in the history of mankind! What celebrity, in the eyes of all nations, have they conferred on Bethlehem, on their country! How a thousand years shrink into a point, before that God who "sees the end from the beginning!" How the purposes of Heaven are accomplished to one iota, to one tit-tle! How places and times are determined of Him who saith, as one having authority, "My counsel shall stand, and I will fulfil all my pleasure."

One of the advantages, and not the least, of travelling abroad, is the joy which the thought of returning home inspires; but this is a consolation which Naomi's return is not permitted to enjoy. She brings back no treasures to purchase attention, to command respect, to excite envy. She is accompanied with no husband, no son, to maintain her cause, or cheer her solitude. She brings back nothing but emptiness, dereliction and tears. A great part of her ancient acquaintance and

friends are gone, as well as her own family. Those who remain hardly know her again, so much are her looks impaired and disfigured with grief. A new generation has arisen, to whom she is an utter stranger, and who are utter strangers to her. But in a little city, a trifling event makes a great noise. The curiosity of the whole town is excited by the appearance of these two insignificant fugitives; and various we may suppose were the inquiries set on foot, the conjectures formed, the remarks made, the censures passed, on their account. This is the never-failing inconveniency of inconsiderable places. Where there is abundance of idleness, abundance of ill-nature, every man is a spy upon his neighbour, every one is at leisure to attend to the affairs of another, because he is but half occupied by his own. We have here enough of inquiry, enough of wonder, but not a single word of compassion, of kindness, of hospitality; and Naomi might have gone without a roof to shelter her head, or a morsel of bread to sustain sinking nature, but for the industry and attachment of her amiable daughter-in-law!

Base, unfeeling world, that can feast itself on the orphan's tears and the widow's sorrow! See, there they are, every one from his own business, or rather his own idleness, to stare and talk a wretched woman out of countenance; the whisper goes round, the finger points, the scandal of ten years standing is revived, and a new colouring is given to it. Affected pity and real indifference wound the heart which God himself has just bruised; whose husband and children he has taken to himself. The wretched mourner seems to feel it; she bursts into an agony of grief, and thus vents the bitterness of her soul, "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?" Verse 20, 21. What simple, but what forcible language the heart speaks! She dwells

on the minute circumstances of her case, takes up her own name as a theme of wo, changes the fond appellation of parental affection, of parental hope, Naomi, on which Providence had poured out the wormwood and gall of disappointment, into one better adapted to her tragical history. The past presents nothing but happiness passed away as a shadow; rank, and opulence, and importance gone, gone, never to return. The future spreads a gloom unirradiated by a single gleam of hope. She apprehends no change of things, but the oppressive change from evil to worse.

But yet her misery admits of alleviation. It comes from God, she sees the hand of a Father in her affliction, she kisses the rod, and commands the soul to peace. To endure distress the fruit of our own folly, to suffer from the pride, cruelty and carelessness of a man like ourselves, is grievous, is unsupportable; it drinks up our spirits. But the evil that comes immediately from God, has its own antidote blended into its substance; we drink the poison and the medicine from the same chalice, and at the same instant; the one destroys the effect of the other; their joint operation is salutary, is life-giving, not deadly. Was that the voice of God which I heard? Spake it not in thunder? Said it not, "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt-offering." It is well; it was the voice of God, and that is enough. I will offer up the sacrifice, I will surrender my dearest delight. I cannot tell how the promise is to be accomplished, consistently with my obedience and submission, but the command and the promise proceed from the same lips; I leave all to him.

From all that we see, Naomi had slender motives, and poor encouragement to return to her own country; we cannot tell what determined her resolution; it might be a little fit of female impatience, occasioned by some piece of Moabitish insolence or unkindness; it might be the mere restlessness of a mind ill at ease, grasping at the shadow of felicity merely from change

of place; it might be the ardent desire of home, of the scenes of childish simplicity, innocence and joy, which in certain circumstances, all men feel, and by which the conduct of all is, to a certain degree, regulated. Whatever it were, it came from above, it was overruled of infinite wisdom, it was, unknown to itself, acting in subserviency to a most important event: and it is thus, that little, unnoticed, unknown powers, put the great machine in motion, produce effects that astonish, and delight, and bless mankind.

The same all-ruling Providence is conspicuous in determining the *season* of Naomi's return. On this hinged all the mighty consequences of Ruth's acquaintance and connexion with Boaz—the birth of kings, the transmission of empire, the accomplishment of ancient prophecy, the hopes of the human race. Had this apparently un consequential journey been accelerated, been retarded, a month, a week, a single day, the parties might never have met. Contingent to men, it was foreseen, fixt, disposed and matured by him “who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.”

Every one observes and records the great incidents of his life. But would you, O man, have rational pleasure, blended with useful instruction, attend to little things, trace matters of highest moment up to their source; and behold thy fate stand quivering on a needle's point; and a colour given to thy whole future life, thy eternal state fixed by a reed shaken with the wind, by an accidental concurrence which thou wert neither seeking nor avoiding; and rejoice to think that all things are under the direction of unerring wisdom, of all-subduing mercy; are “working together for good.”

Does this teach a lesson of levity and inconsideration? Darest thou to trifle with thy everlasting concerns because there is a God who ruleth and judgeth in the earth, who doth all things after the counsel of his own will? God forbid. Presumptuously to lead the decrees of Providence, impiously to resist them, or

timidly to draw back, are equally offensive to a righteous, a holy and wise God.

We have seen the unhappy Naomi stripped of almost every earthly good; husband, children, friends, means, country, comfort; it is the dark midnight hour with her. No, there is one lamp left burning, to dissipate the gloom, to prevent despair—the sacred flame of virtuous friendship. No, the sun of righteousness is hastening to the brightness of his arising. The name, after all, was propitious and prophetic; God brings it about in his own way, and it is “wondrous in our eyes.”

The continuation of this story will carry us on to the contemplation of scenes of rural simplicity, for the enjoyment of which, grandeur might well relinquish its pride and pomp, its vanity and vexation of spirit, and rejoice in the exchange. Let us meanwhile pause and reflect on the history of Naomi, as administering useful instruction.

1st. As an admonition never to despair. God frequently brings his people to that mournful spectacle, hope expiring, that he may have the undivided honour of reviving it again, and may be acknowledged as the one pure and perennial fountain of light and life and joy. The condition of Jacob, of Joseph, of Naomi, all preach one and the same doctrine; all proclaim that the time of man's extremity is God's opportunity.

2dly. Let us call, let us reckon nothing mean or contemptible which God employs, or may be pleased to employ, in his service. The notice of the King of kings impresses dignity and importance, confers true nobility on the low born child, the beggar, the outcast, the slave. On them all he has stamped his own image; and their present and every future condition is the work of his providence. “It is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish:” and if destined to salvation, to what worldly distinction may they not aspire, may they not arrive? Carefully mark the progress of children: study the bent of their

dispositions, of their talents: endeavour to put them in the train which nature and Providence seem to have pointed out: attend to what constitutes their real consequence in life, and leave the issue to Him who governs all events.

3dly. Observe how the great Ruler of the universe contrasts and connects great things with small, that he may humble the pride of man, and expose the nothingness of the glory of this world. That forlorn gleaner, and Boaz the wealthy; the exile from Moab, and the resident possessor of the fertile planes of Beth-lehem-Judah, seem wonderfully remote from each other. Their condition is as opposite as human life can well present: but in the eye of Heaven they are already one. She is but a single step from being lady of the harvest which she gleans, “an help meet” for its lord, and the sovereign mistress of those servants at whose aspect she now trembles, the meanest of whom she now looks up to as her superior. Childless and a widow, her family, her own children are but three steps from a throne—the throne of Judah and Israel; and in the purpose of the Eternal, “the fulness of time” is hastening to exhibit to an astonished world, in the person of this woman’s seed, “that Prince of peace, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” The period is approaching, men and brethren, when Beth-lehem-Judah shall display greater wonders, contrasts more confounding than these. The time is at hand, when another forlorn damsel of the same race, and her outcast babe shall appear in contrast with all that is stupendous, striking, formidable, venerable in heaven and earth, shall rise above all, give laws to all, eclipse all. Behold that “babe lying in a manger, in a stable, because there is no room for him in the inn,” controlling the counsels of Augustus, the mighty master

of the world; behold him drawing princes and wise men from the east, with treasures of gold, and frankincense and myrrh, to his feet. Behold the face of heaven irradiated, enriched with a new star, to mark the way which led to his cradle: while a multitude of the heavenly host announce in rapturous strains the birth of the lowly infant. Behold “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” “of no reputation;” “in the form of a servant;” “numbered with transgressors;” “obedient to death, even the death of the cross.” Behold him “highly exalted;” “leading captivity captive;” “all the angels of God worshipping him;” invested with “a name that is above every name;” “crowned with glory and honour;” “coming in the clouds of heaven!” To him let my knee bow, and my tongue confess. “His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doth wonderful things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and amen,” Psalm lxxii. 17—19.

4thly. In the adoption of Ruth into the church of God, and “the commonwealth of Israel,” we have another dawning ray of hope arising upon the Gentile nations. The tide is beginning imperceptibly to rise and swell, which shall at length become an overflowing ocean. “In that seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” That stranger shall be employed in bringing forward the mighty plan to maturity. “Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands to God.” “They shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.” Verily God is no respecter of persons.

HISTORY OF RUTH.

LECTURE X.

And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech—RUTH ii. 1—3.

PROVIDENCE has graciously annexed to honest industry, both respectability and happiness. The purest and most delicious enjoyment that human life admits of, perhaps is, when a man sits down with those whom he loves, to the temperate indulgence of that refreshment and repose which he has just earned and sweetened with his labour. The greatest, and wisest, and best of men, are ever presented to us, as engaged in virtuous employment and exertion; as deriving health, subsistence, reputation and comfort from the exercise, not the inactivity of their bodily and mental powers: and happily, the scenes in which every man is conversant, seem to him the most interesting of all, his own station the most eminent or useful, his own pursuits the most important. Hence a certain degree

of self-complacency, of self-satisfaction, pervades the whole; every one is acting in his own sphere; while infinite wisdom binds all together by invisible or unnoticed bands, and the various members, without knowledge or design, co-operate for the common benefit, and fulfil the great design of Heaven.

Idleness is not more dishonourable, than it is inimical to real felicity. The sluggard at once defeats the purpose of his Maker, and destroys his own peace: and what was denounced against man as a punishment, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,” like every other punishment that comes from above, is converted into a blessing; and, as in every other case, the great God is just and merciful at once; just in imposing on the fallen creature the necessity of labouring; merciful, in rendering the fruit of it so sweet.

But can the inhabitants of a great, commercial, polished *city*, find either amusement, or instruction in contemplating the rude and simple manners of ancient times; in listening to the history of the inglorious toils of the husbandman; in tracing the operations of an art, the very terms of which they do not understand; in observing the mean employments of poverty and wretchedness which they only pity or despise? Whether they can derive amusement, or instruction, from such things as these, or not, may not courtly pride be admonished in behalf of the lowly, rustic sons of want and industry, in the words of two sweet singing bards of our own country.

“Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure:
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor.”

GRAY’S Church-yard.

———“Nor ye who live
In luxury and ease, in pomp and pride,
Think these lost themes unworthy of your ear.”

THOMSON’S Spring.

We have heard the artless tale of Naomi's wo, and Ruth's attachment. We have accompanied the deserted, widowed mother and daughter-in-law from Moab to Beth-lehem Judah, the city of their departed husbands: but alas, all the reception they met with, is stupid wonder, silly curiosity, or insulting pity. We hear of no kind contention to entertain the stranger and succour the distress. The season of reaping was come; but for them no golden harvest waved in the wind, for them no mower was preparing his sickle; their poverty was but embittered by the sight of plenty diffused around: and the misery of Naomi's fall is dreadfully aggravated, by the prosperity which Elimelech's nearest relations were enjoying.

Of these the most distinguished was Boaz, whom the sacred historian introduces to our acquaintance as "a mighty man of wealth." Riches, like every other gift of God, become a blessing or a curse just according to the use that is made of them. Riches are a solid good, when they are received with thankfulness, enjoyed with moderation, and employed in the service of God and of mankind; but are perverted into a sore evil when they engender pride, and harden the heart, as is too generally the case, when they purchase fuel for the lusts, or are fabricated into a golden image, to become the unworthy object of adoration. Had Boaz been merely a man of wealth, he had not deserved a place in these sacred memoirs; but though a rich man, he was not slothful in business; he was a man of humanity, of intelligence, of discretion, of affability: a man that feared the Lord, that did justly, that loved mercy. He was ennobled by qualities which great possessions cannot confer, and which do not, with fugitive treasures, fly away as an eagle towards heaven.

Behold the mysterious distribution of the gifts of Providence! The family of one "brother is waxen poor and fallen into decay;" that of the other is shining in splendour, affluence and renown. Hasty and

partial views of divine conduct, are always puzzling and distressful; calm and comprehensive investigation, will ever lead to composure and acquiescence.

What must these helpless women do for daily bread? They sit neglected and forlorn; but dependency will only increase the calamity. Necessity suggests many expedients. While health, virtue and friendship remain, all is not lost, and Heaven frequently permits the current of human felicity to spend itself to the very lowest ebb, that its own hand may be acknowledged in the means which caused the flood to rise and swell again.

The proposal of Ruth to her mother-in-law, discovers in every point of view, a noble and ingenuous spirit, and an excellent heart. She will do nothing without the consent and advice of the venerable matron who was become father and mother, country, friends, and every thing to her. Begging is the last miserable refuge of age or infirmity, of disease or sloth; she scorns to think of recurring to it, while she has youth, health and strength to labour, and while there was a field of lawful employment. An ordinary mind, in her situation, would have vented itself in unavailing womanish lamentations; perhaps in unkind upbraidings of the ancient woman, as the cause of all the distress which she endured; would have been for dispatching Naomi up and down among her wealthy relations and town-folks, to solicit protection and subsistence. No, it is more honourable in her eyes to earn food by her own labour; she conceals the anguish which rung her own heart, for fear of adding affliction to the afflicted. The season of the year was favourable and happily the law of that God whom she had deliberately taken for her God, had made provision for persons in her destitute condition.

The same bounty which poured the abundance of autumn into the lap of the mighty, had reserved a pittance for the support of the famished and friendless.

How the mercy of Jehovah bursts upon us in every dispensation and in every event! In wisdom he has permitted distinctions of rank and fortune to take place; in compassion he has taken care to make provision for the wants of the necessitous. So that while industry and pity remain, no one is reduced to absolute despair.

It is with pleasure we recur to the words of the law, and trace that God who “careth for oxen,” much more solicitous about the support and consolation of the miserable part of the rational creation. “And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the Lord your God,” Lev. xix. 9, 10. And again, “When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the Lord your God,” Lev. xxiii. 22. And again, in recapitulating the law, in Deuteronomy, “When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for thee widow: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the works of thine hands. When thou beatest thine olive-tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bond-man in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing,” Deut. xxiv. 19—22.

In this law, several remarkable circumstances, tending to illustrate the law of nature in general, and the

spirit of the Mosaic dispensation in particular, press themselves upon our notice.

1st. The consideration and recollection of their own and their fathers' misery in Egypt, are urged as the powerful motive to pity, to spare and to succour. "A Syrian ready to perish" on the road to Padanaram "was my father." A generation of slaves in Egypt were my progenitors, let me therefore commiserate, and receive, and cherish, the forlorn traveller; let me treat my own captive, bond-man, dependent, with gentleness, and humanity." Who gives charity? Not unfeeling wealth, nor giddy dissipation; but the man who has known want, who once stood in need of a friend, who has been himself succoured in the hour of calamity. Who is it that relents and forgives? Not cold-blooded, meritless, constitutional virtue; but restored, recovered frailty; goodness which arose the purer and the stronger from having fallen. Who is liberal and generous? Not the nobly born, the unvaryingly prosperous; but magnanimity nursed on the breast of adversity; the prince whom native worth, whom conscious dignity, whom the experience of human woe have taught to devise liberal things, to do good, and to communicate. But is hereditary greatness, unvarying opulence, unhumbled, unmortified success, always cold, selfish, unfeeling? God forbid. High birth, lineal honours, the accumulating wealth of many generations, sometimes put on their most beautiful garments, borrow lustre from condescension, sympathy and beneficence. Is successful adversity, illuminated obscurity, aggrandized littleness, always merciful, condescending, generous, and humane? O, no: the poor wretch frequently forgets himself; condemns the arts by which he arose, spurns the ladder on which he climbed to eminence and distinction, and tries to make his upstart greatness bear a mimic resemblance to antique dignity, by aping the viler, not the nobler qualities of traditional importance.

Again, 2dly. Observe the law inculcates pity to

the poor and wretched by the most glorious of all examples. “I am the Lord, who had compassion upon you in your misery, who delivered you from the furnace, who drove out the nations from before you, who planted you in the land, who fill thy garner, and make thy wine-press to overflow; and who only ask, in return, a mite or two, for the sons and daughters of affliction, these few ears which thy haste has let fall to the ground, that sheaf which has accidentally dropped from thy car; that little corner of thy field which the sickle has spared, and which that starving creature, by nature thy equal, by Providence thy inferior, is waiting to pick up and devour. He is an object of tenderness and affection to me, see therefore that thou neglect him not, that thou defraud him not, that thou distress him not.”

3dly. The law plainly supposes that there may be an over anxiety and solicitude about things in their own nature lawful and innocent; which it therefore aims at repressing: it supposes that there may be an eagerness of accumulation which defeats itself, a scattering abroad that produces increase, a withholding of more than is meet, and it tendeth only to poverty; that diffusing, not hoarding up abundance, is the proper use of it.

4thly. The law had a double object in view, the improvement of the affluent, and the relief of the poor. It thus became a mutual benefit, the one was blessed in giving, the other in receiving. The greater blessedness however on the side of the giver, as the blessedness of the Creator is superior to that of the creature. It is as much an ordination of Providence, that “the poor should never cease out of the land,” as that “the earth should yield her increase,” and the spheres perform their stated revolutions: and while they do exist, the great Lord and Preserver of all things, is concerned to make suitable provision for them. The rich are *his* stewards, and *their* storekeepers: he that gleans his own field to the last ear, is a thief and a robber as much as he who plunders his neighbour’s granary; he robs

God, he plunders the needy and the destitute, he does what he can to subvert the divine government, he would make the law of charity and mercy of none effect, he bars his own plea for pardon at a throne of grace, he mars the possession of all he has, he cankers his own enjoyment, and affixes his seal to his own condemnation.

5thly. The law particularly describes the objects which it meant to relieve, “the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.” Unhappy Ruth! her title to the wretched offal from the hand of the reaper was but too well established. She united in her own person all these characters of wo. Her melancholy claim to pity and support was fearfully multiplied, and a three-fold burden presses her down to the ground: nevertheless she entreats, as a boon, what she might have demanded, and taken, as a right.

Her trust in, and submission to the direction of Providence sweetly accord with her filial affection and tenderness, and her noble independency of spirit; she is determined to labour, she disdains not to employ the necessary means for supplying herself and aged parent with food, but she leaves the direction of her footsteps to High Heaven; she is in the way of her duty, and deposits all anxiety about the issue in the bosom of her heavenly Father. What a happy mixture of fortitude and resignation! It cannot but prosper.

Having obtained the consent of her mother, who perhaps might have a presentiment of what was approaching, behold her up with the dawn, pensive, timorous and slow, advancing to the fields; the country all before her, where to choose her place of toil, and Providence her guide; with the downcast look of ingenuous modesty; the timidity which sour misfortune inspires; the firm step of conscious rectitude, and the flushed cheek of kindling hope. By some nameless, unaccountable circumstance, Heaven-directed, she unknowingly bends her course to the field and reapers of Boaz. She has done her part, has made the sacrifices which conscience and affection demanded, has submitted

cheerfully to the hardships which necessity imposed, has put herself in the way of relief which her situation pointed out. God is good, and takes all the rest upon himself. He, who ordered her flight to Canaan at the time of barley-harvest, when nature, and Providence, and the law concurred to find her subsistence, orders her path to that field, where every thing, without the knowledge of the parties concerned, was prepared and arranged for the high scenes now ready to be acted.

The order of human procedure generally is from blaze to smoke, from noise and bustle to nothing, from mighty preparation, to feebleness of execution. The divine conduct, on the contrary, is a glorious rise from obscurity into light, from "small beginnings to a latter end greatly increased;" from "the mouth of babes and sucklings he ordaineth strength," and by a concurrence of circumstances which no human sagacity could foresee, and no human power could either bring together or keep asunder, raises a neglected gleaner in the field into the lady of the domain, and a fugitive of Moab into a mother in Israel; a mother of kings, whose name shall never expire but with the dissolution of nature.

At this period of the story, let us pause, and meditate, —On the power which regulates and controls all the affairs of men, who has all hearts, all events in his hand, who "poureth contempt upon princes, and bringeth to nought the wisdom of the prudent;" who "raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people; he maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children." Is there a God who "doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth?" then let me never "be high-minded, but fear" always before him, for I am never out of his reach, never concealed from his eye, never sheltered from his justice. Is there a God who judg-

eth in the earth, in whom the fatherless findeth mercy, to whom the miserable never look, never cry in vain, then let me never sink into despair. I am not too humble for his notice, my disease is not beyond his skill to cure, my wants are not too numerous for his supplies, nor my transgressions beyond the multitude of his tender mercies. Doth not he deck the lilly, and feed the raven? a sparrow riseth not on the wing, falleth not to the ground, without my heavenly Father. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped," and "his hand is not shortened, nor his ear heavy, nor his bowels of compassion restrained."

Meditate again, on what ground you have encouragement to ask and to expect the divine protection and favour. Have you given up all for God? Have you good hope through grace that you are reconciled to God through the blood of his Son? Have you a good conscience toward God that you are in the proper use of appointed means? Can you look up with confidence and say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest I have not folded my hands to sleep, have not sat down in sullen discontent, have not charged thee foolishly, have not fled to unjustifiable methods of relief. I have not impiously striven with my Maker, nor presumptuously expected a miracle to be wrought in my behalf. I have in much weakness, but in trembling hope, endeavoured to do my duty; and I now, Lord, cast all my care, cast my burden upon thee." Look into the history of divine interpositions. Were they in compliment to the peevish and capricious, were they extorted by the loud lamentations or the secret murmurings of insolence and ingratitude? were they the pillows smoothed by the hand of weak indulgence for the drowsy head of sloth and indifference to repose on? No, but they were the seasonable cordial of parental affection to a fainting child; the reward which wisdom and goodness bestow on diligence and perseverance; the indissoluble union which God has established be-

tween human exertion and divine co-operation; they were the recompense of labour and vigilance, the answer of prayer.

Meditate yet again, on the true dignity of human nature, on the true glory of man and woman also;—honest, useful employment. It is not idle, luxurious enjoyment, it is not to do nothing, to be eternally waited upon, and ministered unto, to grow torpid by inaction, to slumber away life in a lethargic dream, and to lose the powers of the soul and body by disuse; but to preserve and promote health by moderate exercise, to earn cheerfulness and self-approbation, by the sweet consciousness that you are not living wholly in vain, and to rise into importance by being somewhat useful to your fellow-creatures. In the eye of sober, unbiassed reason, whether of the two is the more pleasing, the more respectable sight; and which is, in her own mind, the happier of the two, Ruth laden with the ears of corn which she has toiled to gather, hastening home to the hut of obscurity, to administer food and comfort to old age and sorrow; or a modern belle, issuing forth under a load of uneasy finery, to imaginary triumphs, and certain disappointment? Who sleeps soundest at night, and who awakes and arises in the best health and spirits next day? I expect not an answer.

The thing speaks for itself; and I have purposely forbore to state the case so strongly as I might have done. The virtuous damsel has, in part, received her reward, but a greater and better is preparing for her. The mother and daughter have been arranging their little matters with discretion; and the great God has been preparing his agents, putting his armies in motion: all is made ready, is made to meet, is made to work together, is made to prosper, by Him who sees the perfect man in the embryo, the end from the beginning, the effect in its primary cause, the eternal chain in every series, and in all its extent.

HISTORY OF RUTH.

LECTURE IX.

And behold, Boaz came from Beth-lehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee.—RUTH ii. 4.

THE short and simple sentence which I have read, might be made the subject of a volume. I intend to make it at least the subject of a Lecture, and entreat your patient attention to a few of the obvious, but neither uninteresting nor unimportant views which it exhibits, of life and manners, of morals and religion.

Men of different characters, from various motives, and for various purposes, might be supposed to assume the plain, unadorned history of the barley-harvest of Boaz, as an useful and instructive topic, of address, and, according to the spirit by which they were actuated, and the end which they had in view, might reason upon it in this manner.

I. The prudent, careful man, would build upon it a system of attention, diligence, and economy. “Behold,” would he say, “behold Boaz, the wealthy and the wise, in his field, among his servants, seeing every thing with his own eyes, giving his orders in person, taking care that every one be in his own place, and performing his particular duty. The air and exercise connected with the operations of husbandry, are conducive to health, to comfort; they promote his interest; they enliven his spirits; moderate labour makes rest

welcome. See, his presence is a check upon idleness, upon carelessness, upon discord; it calls forth industry, it creates honest emulation; it reconciles the peasant to his toil to see the master participating in it. He has brought himself down to the level of the poor labourer, who seems to have risen in proportion. See, nothing escapes his notice, not even a wretched gleaner behind the reapers; he must be informed of every thing; to the minutest circumstance he will judge for himself.

“ Young man, set out in life, and conduct your progress on such a principle, on such a model as this. It is the certain road to affluence, to respectability: you are thereby at once serving yourself, your dependants, and your country. Whatever be thy station, whatever thy employment, let thy heart be in it; let thy time and thy attention be devoted to it. *“ Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.” “ Be not slothful in business. Let every thing be done in its season; let every thing be done decently and in order.” “ The hand of the diligent maketh rich ” “ Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.”*

“ To these might be added innumerable admonitions and arguments, drawn from scripture, from reason, from history, from experience, all tending to demonstrate the wisdom, the utility, the necessity of doing what thy hand findeth to do, with thy *might*; and to prove the folly, the danger, the misery of sloth and inattention. But example is beyond all precept. Survey yonder field; from Ruth up to Boaz, all are busy, all are pleased and cheerful, all are happy. Be instructed, my son, by the prospect; and learn that God, and nature, and reason, have inseparably connected industry and felicity; have made bodily health and inward peace, prosperity and importance, to flow from virtuous temperate exertion, as the stream from its source.”

II. The moralist would take up the subject in a point

of view somewhat different. "Observe," would he say, "the reciprocal duties arising out of the mutual relations of human life. We have them here beautifully exemplified in the relation of master and servant. Besides the more obvious obligations of justice on the one, in faithfully performing the stipulated labour; on the other, in punctually bestowing the promised wages of the hireling, behold the tacit obligations of mutual affection and benevolence. Obligations, founded not indeed upon a written law, but interwoven with the constitution and frame of our nature, and which the man who feels not, acknowledges not, the man who neglects or violates, let his adherence to the letter of the law be ever so close and exact, is a traitor to God and society. Nay, he is a traitor to himself by cutting off one of the purest sources of his own enjoyment, and at the same time depriving mankind of one of their justest claims.

"Boaz and his reapers meet with mutual cordiality. They give and receive the salutation of peace. He accosts them as a father would his children, not as a taskmaster would the miserable drudges subjected to his authority. They address him with the kindly and humble familiarity of sons, not the distant timidity of slaves trembling for fear of the rod. They exact the price of their service as a debt; but they receive the gentle language and smiles of their employers as a favour. He expects them to be honest and diligent, for conscience sake; but contentment with their condition, and good-will to him, he thankfully receives, as an unconditioned, extraordinary effort to promote his interest.

"Suppose, for a moment, the temper and character of both changed; and the force of the example will be more clearly understood, and more powerfully felt. Without supposing any one precept of morality, or dictate of religion infringed, what a different aspect would the field of Boaz wear! Lo, where comes the surly, stately, self-important lord of the manor, sur-

veying in the pride of his heart, his increasing store, looking down on the humble, hardy sons of toil, as mere beasts of burden, designed to minister to his convenience. He vouchsafes them never a word, except perhaps to complain, to threaten, or to upbraid: and then, in sullen silence and state, retires again. The insulted labourers on the other hand, regard him with terror or disgust. The social compact is dissolved between them. No eye welcomed his approach with a smile, no whisper of gratulation conveyed his name from ear to ear, no tongue pronounced "*God bless him.*" The half-smothered execration pursued his withdrawing steps, and he well deserved it.

"What thinkest thou, my young friend, of the picture? Learn from it, that to doing justly, there must be added loving mercy, and walking humbly. Learn, that the duties and felicities of human life consist in numberless, nameless, undefinable little offices, which every one may learn without a teacher, and which every one may, if he will, perform. All have it not in their power to supply the poor, to heal the sick, to succour the distressed. Opportunity does not every day offer, nor ability permit to confer material, essential benefits; but it is in the power of all to express sympathy, to breathe a kind wish. Opportunities every hour, every moment present themselves, and ability never fails of looking pleasantly, of speaking gently and affectionately. And he is a wretch indeed who knows that the unbending of an eye-brow, the utterance of a syllable or two, the alteration of half a tone of his voice, the simple extension of his hand would in a moment relieve a heart overwhelmed with sorrow, wrung with anguish, and yet cruelly withholds so slender, so easy, so cheap a consolation.

"Young man, if it be thy misfortune to have to struggle with a harsh, ungainly, unbending disposition, the sooner you set out in quest of victory the better. Remember that thy own comfort is involved, beyond

the power of separation, with that of thy fellow-creatures. Take care that the *manner* of showing mercy, or of conferring obligation mar not the *matter* of the benefit. The man who *refuses graciously*, impresses on the heart a more favourable idea of himself, than he who *grants* with harshness, insolence or pride. True goodness considers, together with what is written on tables of stone, what is engraven on *the living tables of the heart*, and from the heart, communicates itself to the forehead, the eyes, the lips, the hand; impressing on the whole the *law of kindness*."

III. The philosopher will cast his eyes along the group scattered over the plains adjoining to Beth-lehem-Judah, and will reflect in a different manner; perhaps thus. "What an endless variety do I observe in the ways and works of the great Creator and Ruler of the universe! Blended with that variety, what mutual relation and dependence! The head, the hands, the feet; the parts which are more noble, and those which are more dishonourable, forming one regular, harmonious body, where there is nothing redundant, nothing deficient. Every thing has its use, every thing has its end. Shade imperceptibly softens into shade; light imperceptibly brightens into light. The transitions are so sweet and gradual, that the eye is never offended, nor overwhelmed. It is the same thing in the body social and politic. Every one stands in need of another. The prince and the peasant meet in a certain point. How many things have they in common! How many things to interest and attract each other!

"Look but to that field. The persons are few; and the conditions much fewer. But even there I see the order, the subordination which Providence has established through the whole extent of the vast universe. There walks the dignified, respectable proprietor of the land, who can trace his title to possession through many generations; exulting in hereditary wealth and honours, without arrogance, vanity or insen-

sibility. Boaz, a prince in his tribe, but a plain man, who knows that he derives his subsistence from the bosom of the earth, who disdains not to mingle with his menial servants, to sit down to a participation of their homely fare, to dip his morsel in the same vinegar, and to lie down to sleep all night in the threshing-floor.

“There the servant who is set over the reapers stirs from ridge to ridge, from company to company, the bond of union between the master and the labourers. Behold him as the trusted humble friend of Boaz, repaying confidence with fidelity; praising the industrious, encouraging the faint, chiding the careless, stimulating the slow. As the sympathizing friend of his less favoured fellow-servants, recollecting how lately he emerged from the same obscurity and subjection, excusing the frailty of nature, covering the faults of thoughtlessness, administering reproof and chastisement with lenity and moderation, bestowing commendation with cheerfulness and cordiality.

“As we descend, a new station, a new character rises into view, the glory and the strength of every land under heaven, the poor, the honest, the manly, the virtuous, the useful, the important part of the community. Not they *who handle the harp and the organ*, but they who put their hands to the plough and the sickle. There they toil, there they sweat, there they sing; there they beguile the fatigues of the day in innocent mirth, and untutored, artless, guileless, unmalignant conversation; and purchase and sweeten the repose of the night, with unoppressive industry, with friendly communication, and pious, unaspiring submission to the pains, the privations, the necessities of their lowly estate.

“These constitute the numerous, the great and good class of our fellow-creatures; who shine in the eye of reason, of patriotism, of philosophy, of religion. They stand not forth the prominent figures in the piece, but their number, their quality, their want of characteristic distinction, confer upon them the greater value.

“But ah, there is beneath them a subordinate rank, which awakens all that is human in us. *They* have health and strength and will to labour; their reward is sure; they support the heat and toil of the day, with the sweet assurance that the thickening shades, that the twelfth hour will bring with them the payment of their hire, the means of subsistence, of domestic joy, of regulated gratification. But look into the back-ground of the piece, and observe that female, that stranger, that orphan, and her a widow; to work unable, to beg ashamed. She has seen better days. Time was, *the wind of heaven* was not permitted *to visit her face too roughly*; she was waited upon, and ministered unto; now she is become *the scorn of clowns; or lower still, their pity*. Where is the lowness of condition from whence it is not possible still to fall! Be what thou wilt, O man, there are some looking *up* to thee with envy and desire: be what thou wilt, there is still cause to say, “*God, I thank thee I am not as other men.*”

“But observe, my young friend,” continues our philosophical monitor, “all these gradations, and infinitely more than can be pointed out, are links in the great chain of human existence; tear one asunder, and the concussion is felt through the whole. The gleaner, the reaper, the overseer, the master of the household, are so many successive steps in the same scale; the most distant not very remote; the nearer hardly distinguishable; all are reduced to the same level before Him, who says to Gabriel, Go, and he goeth, and to the sparrow hovering on the wing, Fall to the ground, and instantly he drops. And again, young man void of understanding, observe, and observe it well, and lay it up in thine heart, how near the extremes of human condition are to one another! The gleaner after the reapers, is but a step or two from the possession of the whole. Wait but a few days, and she who is liable to be insulted, at best pitied, shall be, in her turn, caressed, flattered, submitted to: and learn, from the whole, the folly of being insolent, self-conceited, or unkind,

unsocial or uncomplying, when the sun of prosperity shineth upon thy tabernacle; or of being discontented, dejected, careless, or mean, when the common ills of humanity overtake thee. That poor inflated creature, who like another Nebuchadnezzar, talks in loud swelling words of vanity, of the *great Babylon which he has built*, I once knew a cringing minion, ready to lick the dust from the feet of the man whom he now struts by as if he were a stranger. That poor boy, whom he disdains to set with the dogs of his flock, is evidently rising into consequence, which is one day to eclipse all the tawdry honours of upstart gentility, and self-assumed importance. My son, derive thy greatness from thyself, from wisdom, from virtue. Take care to adorn thy station, thy possessions, by native goodness. Piti-able indeed is thy condition, if rank or affluence, or even talents, serve only to render thy folly or profligacy more conspicuous."

IV. Once more, let me suppose a man of genuine piety contemplating the interesting scene before us, and entering with wonder and delight into the plans of the Eternal Mind. His meditations will flow in still a different channel, he will view the same object through still a different medium. "Behold," will he say, "*how sweet is the smell of a field which Jehovah hath blessed!* Happy Boaz, rich in lands and in corn, rich in man-servants and maid-servants, rich in the dutiful and affectionate attachment of thy people, rich in thine own integrity and composure of spirit; but richer far in the favour and approbation of the Almighty: *the blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow therewith.* Happy family, thus dwelling together in unity; where love is the governing principle, where the fear of God sweetly expresses itself in unfeigned benevolence to man! How can that house but prosper, where religion has established her throne? Look at that happy plain over which the bountiful hand of nature has spread her rich exuberance. *The Lord maketh that wealth.* Behold the patriarchal mas-

ter: the meanest slave he treats like a child: hearken, the voice of peace and benediction dwells on his lips, distils like the dew. Behold the way to be loved and respected by inferiors. Be to them an ensample of piety, of purity, of charity; bind them to you with cords of love; sweet and faithful, cheerful and efficient is the service of affection. These men will yield obedience not *for wrath only, but for conscience sake*; their heart is in their work: they need no overseer; they will neither be negligent nor dishonest: they know that the eye of God is continually upon them; they know that the interest of the master is their own.

“How happily religion adapts its influence to every relation and condition of life! How it guards the heart alike from *foolish pride* and *impious discontent* at what bounty has bestowed, or wisdom denied! How it humanizes, dignifies, exalts the soul! How it enforces, extends, and refines the maxims of worldly prudence! How it illustrates, binds, and enlivens the precepts of morality! How it amplifies, expands, regulates, brightens the views of philosophy; referring every thing to God, deriving all from him, carrying all back to him again! O man, till thou hast founded thy domestic economy in religion, thou hast not begun to keep house. Let thy possessions be ever so fair, ever so extensive, they want their principal charm, their highest excellence, till the blessing of Heaven be asked and obtained.

“Mark yet again, how a *good man's footsteps are all ordered of the Lord. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* Boaz came forth with no farther view than to see the progress of his harvest, to salute his servants, and to cheer their labour by his presence and approving smiles; but lo, Providence has been preparing for him a more enlarged view, has enriched his field with a nobler portion than he had any apprehension of. *Thy ways, my King and my God, thy ways are in the sea. and thy path in the deep waters, and thy judgments are unsearchable.* The great God is working unseen, unnoticed. He is preparing his in-

struments at a distance, arranging his agents in the dark. Unseen to, unknown by one another, without concert or design, they come forth at the moment, they perform the part assigned them; they speak and act in perfect unison, they accomplish the purpose of the Eternal. Boaz and Ruth, behold them together in the field, remote as penury and fulness, as obscurity and celebrity, as dependence and being depended upon. Nevertheless they meet, and Heaven from above crowns the hallowed union with her olive."

But might not the pious spirit annex a caution to his exhortation on this subject? "*Beware of taking the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain. Holy and reverend is his name.* Even in blessing, it is to be used solemnly, piously, sparingly: who then shall dare to employ it wantonly, needlessly, profanely, impiously, blasphemously? Who shall presume to abuse it, in swearing falsely by it, or in imprecating a curse under that dreadful sanction upon the head of his brother? Avert, merciful Heaven, avert from my guilty, heavy-laden country, the heavy, the bitter curse which this sin deserves! O, let not profane swearing, let not wilful, deliberate perjury, prove its ruin!"

—Thus have I endeavoured, by assuming several supposed characters, to give life and energy to the simple, rural scene under consideration. It furnishes copious matter of instruction to every teacher, and to every class of mankind. The careful, prudent man of the world; the moralist; the calm observer; the pious instructor, are all here provided with useful topics of address to their several pupils, according to their several views. The master and the servant, the hireling and his employer, the rich and the poor, here meet together, and are together informed, by more than a code of laws, by plain but striking example, of their mutual relation and dependence, and of the duties which arise out of them, and of the comforts which

flow from them. Happiness is here represented as built on the sure foundation of kind affections, of useful industry, of reciprocal good offices, and of the fear of the Lord. Where all these unite, that house must stand, that family must prosper. In proportion as all or any of them are wanting, a partial or total ruin must ensue. Let the apostolic injunctions serve practically to enforce the subject. “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him,” Ephes. vi. 5—9. “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life,” 1 Tim. vi. 17—19. “Harken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?” James ii. 5. “Ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive,” Acts xx. 34—35. “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth,” Ephes. iv. 28.

HISTORY OF RUTH.

LECTURE XII.

Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: and she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house. Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. Then she said, Let me find favour

in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine hand-maid, though I be not like unto one of thine hand-maidens. And Boaz said unto her, At meal-time come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left. And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not. And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them that she may glean them, and rebuke her not. So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.—RUTH ii. 5—17.

THE life of the husbandman is full of labour and anxiety, but it is also sweetened and relieved by many peculiar delights. He must rise early, and often retire late to rest; he is exposed now to the scorching heat of the meridian sun, and now to the unwholesome damps of the night. He has to watch every aspect of the sky; and to guard against the strife of contending elements: and after all his vigilance and foresight, he has frequently the mortification to see the exertions, and the hopes of a whole year, destroyed in an hour. But on the other hand, the very variety which his profession admits of, deceives the toils of it; his life is constantly a life of hope; his health and prosperity flow from the same source; he spends not his strength for nought and in vain; the bountiful parent earth restores the precious seed cast into it with large increase, thirty, sixty, an hundred fold. He has the pleasure of observing the hourly progress of vegetation; of seeing his supplies coming immediately from the hand of Providence. Piety and profit are promoted by the same employments and pursuits, and the sublimest truths of religion press upon him in the plainest and most common ap-

pearances of nature. Add to this, the labours of the husbandman are of all others the most essential, the most important to society. Other arts may minister to wealth, to pleasure, to conveniency and comfort, but on this depends the very subsistence of human life; and to the plough and the sickle, the ingenious manufacturer, the pampered citizen and the haughty peer must, of necessity, look for the main ingredient of their daily support.

It was, then, in that happy state of civil society, the scene is laid which is to be the subject of this evening's meditation. It was that joyful season of the year when the ardour of summer was giving place to the milder glory of autumn; when industry was gathering in the produce of hope, when the common occupations of the sun-burnt plain had levelled the distinctions of master and servant; when all was emulation, cheerfulness and joy, that Boaz issued forth betimes to superintend his harvest, and Ruth to glean after the reapers. Her sex, her demeanor, her employment, which bespoke her poverty, attract his notice and excite his compassion. There are persons, there are countenances, there is a deportment, which strike at first sight, and create an interest which it is impossible to account for. The great hand of nature has in many, perhaps in most instances, engraven on the external appearance, no doubtful or equivocal signs of the internal spirit and character: Ruth presented to the eye of Boaz an undescribable somewhat, which spoke her immediately to be above the level of those common drudges whose minds their servile condition has degraded; her native greatness shone through the evil that covered it, and naturally led to an inquiry into her situation and connexions. The attention which her figure and occupation at first roused, her history powerfully fixes and confirms. The mournful story of Naomi, and of the Moabitish damsel her daughter-in-law, all Beth-lehem-Judah had heard, but not one had stepped forth to acknowledge and relieve them. Boaz himself is faulty here. Had he been informed, as he must, of the return

of his nearest relations, and of their wretched flight, he ought to have sought them out, and, unsolicited, to have ministered to their comfort. He is, in this respect, an instance of what is frequently to be met with in the world; of that calm, unimpassioned goodness which is abundantly disposed to succour distress when it falls in the way, but is not sufficiently zealous and vigorous, and active, to go abroad in quest of objects to relieve. But let us not pretend to look down on moderate and ordinary beneficence, till the pure and sublime come more into use. The former neglect of Boaz, and his future zeal, shall but the more redound to the glory of God.

—The short and simple tale awakens a thousand tender emotions in the bosom of the good man. He feels the sad reverses to which families and states, and all sublunary things are exposed. He sees one branch of his own kindred demolished, extinguished. A woman, a young woman, a widow, a stranger in a strange land, but one step above begging her bread; with a still more wretched mother to sustain by the meagre fruits of her feeble industry. He sees women of condition, his equals, fallen far below the estate of the meanest of his servants and hand-maids. Self-reproach perhaps mingled with compassion, and instantly produced a resolution to compensate past carelessness and unkindness, by all that future sympathy and friendship could bestow. The dialogue that ensues is a beautiful exhibition of the honest simplicity of nature. The characters are supported with a happiness of expression, and displayed with a strength and exactness of colouring, worthy of Him who knows what is in man.

In Boaz which shall we most admire, his prudent attention to his own affairs, his winning condescension to his inferiors, or his pious acknowledgment of God in every thing? In his conduct to the forlorn stranger, we see a heart overflowing with benevolence, attending to minute circumstances, out-running the expectations, the very wishes of the person whom he means to oblige. Observe his delicacy; he recommends the solitary

helpless female to the society and protection of those of her own sex, and by his authority guards her from the incivility and insults of the other. He aims at soothing her soul to peace; he would have her believe herself at home. The law obliged him to permit her to glean, but he makes a free-will offering of much more; the liquor in the vessels, the food provided for the reapers, all is tendered to her with hearty good will. Ordinary minds feel ashamed at the sight of poor relations, deny them, turn away from them, hide their faces from their own flesh. True magnanimity thinks meanly of nothing but vice, esteems worth, though clothed in rags, considers the revolutions which affect every thing under the sun, despises not the wretch of to-day, knowing that he may be obliged to change places with him to-morrow. Such an one was the wealthy owner of yonder happy field. The spirit of the master is diffused, it is felt over the whole extended domain. No jarring string mars their rural harmony, no contention reigns, but the strife, the blessed strife, of mutual affection and attachment.

The character of Ruth opened upon us with singular grace and beauty: it unfolds itself with equal energy and propriety. She discovers from first to last, a soul susceptible of tender and persevering attachment; ready to yield the sacrifice of ease, of rank, of estimation, of every thing, for the sake of enjoying the testimony of a good conscience, and the society that she loved. She discovers a spirit at once sweetly timid and bashful, and nobly resolute and undaunted. She inspires love by her gentleness, meekness and complacency; she commands respect by her firmness, magnanimity and patience. In addressing her mother-in-law, she is all amiable warmth and earnestness; in replying to the friendly tenders of Boaz, she is all amiable reserve and modesty. In speaking to Naomi her heart flows to her lips, her words glow, her speech is copious and redundant: in answering a man, and a stranger, her words are few, she speaks by looks and gestures, and is then most eloquent when she says nothing.

I behold the effect which youth, and simplicity, and humbleness of mind, and distress have made upon a generous and sensible heart. The artless simplicity of the Moabitish damsel have made a deeper impression than all that cunning and design could have invented to allure affection, and impose on the understanding. Happily the progress of virtuous love advances without the consciousness of the parties concerned; it is at first a mere intercourse of civility, an attention to trifles, an interchange of kind words and pleasant looks. It grows unperceived, it gathers strength by neglect, it has arrived at maturity before it was known to exist, it gave no warning of its approach, and thereby became irresistible. And has the great Author of nature vouchsafed in his word to delineate, in more than one instance, the nature, progress, and effects of this important and necessary passion, and shall we turn away from it with affected delicacy, or take it up and pursue it with indecent mirth? No, if we adopt and imitate the candid, guileless simplicity, and the modest reserve of scripture, we cannot greatly err.

In the case of Boaz and Ruth, it was enchantingly grateful to the former, as highly honourable to the latter, that the decision of the understanding confirmed the judgment of the eyes. He had known, admired and approved the conduct, before he had seen and admired the beauty of the person, and the gracefulness of the behaviour. The charms of wisdom, virtue and piety, superadded to personal accomplishments, what a happy combination; what a foundation of felicity! The latter indeed, will and must fade, but their effect is immortal; the company in which they flourished and brought forth fruit, bestows on them a permanency not their own. How wretched is that female all whose consequence is fled with her bloom; who depended on rank or fortune to command respect; who has lost the admiration and applause of others, before she has begun to acquire the dignity of self-approbation, the only genuine source of public esteem.

The history before us strikingly displays the transition from pity to love on the one hand, from gratitude to love on the other. Compassion in Boaz, sense of obligation in Ruth, excite the same mutual affection in both. It becomes *his* pride and joy to raise her to that distinction and affluence which she so well merited; it is *her* pride and joy to repay the tenderness of her benefactor by every kind office of compliance and affection. She had hitherto pleased herself with the consciousness of having done her duty; she had not hunted after praise; she had discovered no anxiety, taken no pains to publish abroad her own merits; but honour will follow virtue, as the shadow does the substance, and the flight of the one but accelerates the pursuit of the other. And how grateful must it have been even to the modest ear of Ruth herself, to hear her conduct approved, and her qualities celebrated, by the wise and good man who had taken her under his protection, and admitted her to his friendship. The praise which goodness confers on goodness, the praise which a man's own heart and conscience allow to be merited, praise bestowed by one we love and esteem is a feast indeed; it does equal honour, it communicates equal delight to the giver and the receiver; it is an anticipation of the glorious rewards of the faithful, from Him whose favour is better than life. But save me, merciful Heaven, from the commendation which my own mind rejects. Save me from the approbation, the ill-informed approbation of ignorant, erring man, while I have just cause to tremble under the apprehension of condemnation and punishment from a holy and righteous God.

The cordial of cordials administered by the hand of Boaz to this truly excellent woman, was his recommendation of her to the care, blessing and protection of the Almighty. It was much to be permitted to pick up a scanty livelihood among strangers; it was much to meet with notice and encouragement from a mighty man of

wealth in a foreign land; it was highly soothing to a spirit broken by calamity to be approved and caressed by a great and good man; but all this was nothing compared to the smiles of approving Heaven, in sweet accord with the serenity and composure of a quiet and approving conscience. How cordially could she pronounce "amen" to his affectionate and pious prayer, "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust," Verse 12.

The petition contains a piece of sweet imagery, of which interpreters have given different ideas. "Under whose wings thou art come to trust." The expression, according to some, implies an approbation of her resolution in renouncing the religion of her country and fathers, in forsaking the idol worship wherein she had been educated, and in deliberately joining herself to the Israelites and worship of the living and true God. The words, it is alleged, have an allusion to the Shechinah, the visible glory, the symbol of the divine presence which resided between, or under, the wings of the cherubim which were extended over the mercy-seat. This is, as it were, the point in which all the parts of the dispensation concurred, and therefore is employed to denote in brief, all that related to the knowledge, belief and service of Jehovah, in opposition to idolatry.

Others consider it as merely a tender and significant image, borrowed from nature, and frequently employed in other passages of scripture, the image of the tender callow brood of the feathered race, fleeing in the moment of danger, for protection, under the shelter of the parental wing. In either case, it marks the providential care, and the sacred security extended to all who seek refuge in the divine wisdom and mercy. No plague shall come nigh the place where they dwell, no evil shall befall them. It unfolds the spirit of a truly good man, disposed to do every thing that humanity dictates, and ability permits, for the relief of the sons and

daughters of affliction; but deeply impressed with the belief that without the blessing and favour of Heaven the interposition of man is vain and unprofitable. He refers not to the divine bounty as an exemption from deeds of charity and mercy, but to render his benevolence effectual, and to crown, promote and prosper his kind intentions; to fill up the measure of his liberal design, which, after all, was narrowed and contracted by slenderness of ability.

The effect of the whole upon Ruth is the same which a sense of unmerited friendship from man, and the expectation of blessings from on high, will ever produce on a good and honest heart. As she rises in situation, as she rises in hope, she sinks in humility. "Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine hand-maid, though I be not like unto one of thy hand-maidens," Verse 13.

This draws from the benevolent lord of the harvest reiterated assurances of regard and sympathy. He again runs over the whole store of the field, lest he should have omitted any particular in his former enumeration; again animates a cheerful and unaffected welcome to what she could desire, or he had to bestow. In this, if I mistake not, may be seen the farther progress of affection. Ruth gains upon his heart by every word she utters, by every gesture and attitude; and pleases most, from having formed, from pursuing no design to please. The greater her diffidence and self-denial, the greater is his earnestness to bring her forward, and to support her. She was by the former order permitted to go at pleasure and serve herself with whatever was in the field for the general use; now, she is invited to join the company where Boaz himself presided; she is fed from his own hand, and her portion is not a scanty one, "she did eat and was sufficed and left." It was thus that Joseph expressed the partiality of his affection for Benjamin his own brother, his mess was five times as much

as any of theirs; and thus in artless guise, the growing passion of Boaz for the fair Moabitess declared itself; and thus, not in high-flown rhapsodies of unmeaning jargon, but in little attentions, in petty offices of kindness, the genuine effusions of unsophisticated nature, the generous passion of love, always will declare its existence and quality. Happy, thrice happy banquet, far beyond all the luxury and pride of unwieldy, uneasy, unblest magnificence. There they sit, under the open canopy of heaven, the master, the servants, the stranger, in one group. Their fare is homely, but labour has made it pleasant to sit down, and hunger gives to the food a relish.

But what a superior relish did the morsel of Boaz himself possess! Think what a banquet, to see his numerous family around him, all contented and happy; to give bread to so many, and to receive the ample return of it in their honest attachment, and in the fruits of their industry. What a luxury, to feed a hungry, to raise a sinking stranger! to render gentle services to a deserving object, which humanity inspired, the understanding confirmed, the heart directed, and Heaven approved! What a desert, to reflect that all these comforts flowed from a heavenly Father's beneficence, that thus he was "twice blessed," blessed in receiving, blessed in giving.

The felicity of Ruth was far from being so pure and perfect. She felt the depression of dependence and obligation; obligation which she had no prospect of ever being able to repay. She felt for the anxiety, distress and want of a venerable aged woman, for whom nothing was provided; who was sitting solitary at home, brooding over past calamities, and tormenting herself with apprehensions about futurity. She can hardly swallow her own morsel for grief to think that one more helpless, more feeble, more friendless than herself, wanted the common necessities of life; that Naomi was perhaps fasting till she returned, and, worse than

fasting, tormented with solicitude about her safety. The sweetest part of the repast to Ruth was the portion she had reserved from her own necessities for the sustentation of her ancient, affectionate, starving parent.

Their frugal, simple meal being ended, they rise up, not to play, but to work again, and continue their labour until the evening. A fresh charge is given to the reapers on no account to disturb, or insult the lovely gleaner, and the young men are directed to find no fault with her, gather where she would, even among the sheaves before they were bound up; and to drop here and there a handful, as if by accident, to render her toil more pleasant and easy, without hurting her honest pride. This injunction could proceed only from a delicate and ingenuous mind. To have made her directly a present of the ears of corn, had been an indignity offered to her poverty; to scatter them without any apparent design, was effectually to facilitate her labour, and diminish her fatigue without rendering the burden of obligation too grievous to be borne. The manner of conferring a benefit, it cannot be too often repeated, infinitely outweighs the matter. The comfort of human life, is a combination of little, minute attentions, which taken separately, are nothing, but connected with the circumstances of time, place and manner, as coming from the heart, as tokens of good-will, possess a value and inspire a pleasure beyond the purchase of gold and rubies.

Think of the heart-felt satisfaction of the amiable labourer, when at the going down of the sun, on separating the straw and chaff from the good grain, and measuring the produce of her patience and industry, she found it to amount to so considerable a quantity! Would you make a poor man happy, do not encourage him to beg. Idleness and happiness are incompatible. No, render his toil a little easier to him, teach him to draw his subsistence and comfort from, and to build his dependence upon himself.

And now Ruth's comfort was going to begin; it was hitherto mixed and imperfect—it now flows pure and unrestrained. She has it in her power to relieve indigence, to remove anxiety, to dispel sorrow, to make the widowed heart sing for joy. See with what exultation she produces her store, re-measures her corn, details the adventures of the day, and receives in communicating joy. This, O virtuous friendship, is thy present great reward! Such, if pride and perverseness prevented not, the felicity which Providence has graciously placed within every one's reach! Let me have some friendly ear, in the calmness of the evening's retreat, to listen to my tale; some sympathetic heart, to participate in my sorrows and my joys, and I care not what hardships I endure, what mortifications I meet with, through the live-long day. Friendship doubles the delights, divides, and thereby diminishes, the cares and miseries of this transitory life.

Think of the composed felicity of the ancient matron, as she surveyed the fruits of her beloved daughter's dutiful exertions, and heard the artless story of a harvest day's employment and recreation. Yes, she is the happier of the two. The joys of age are calm, untumultuous, untempestuous; those of youth have always a mixture of ardour and impetuosity, that allays their purity, and hastens on their dissolution. We sincerely bid them good night, and leave them to the sweet repose of conscious integrity, of acquiescence in the will and thankfulness for the bounty of gracious Heaven, and of budding, blossoming hope of greater blessings yet to come.

—At what a small expense may a great man acquire respect, esteem, love? How infinitely nature excels art! In how simple and easy a method does Providence bring about the greatest events! “Godliness is” every way “great gain:” it has “the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

HISTORY OF RUTH.

LECTURE XIII.

And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? And where wroughtest thou? Blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to-day is Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen. And Ruth, the Moabitess, said, He said unto me also. Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest. And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law. It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field. So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley-harvest, and of wheat-harvest; and dwelt with her mother-in-law. Then Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? —RUTH ii. 19—23, and iii. 1.

NOTHING is more absurd than to judge of ancient and foreign customs, by the fashion of our own country and of the present day. Language, manners, and dress are incessantly changing their form. Were our ancestors of the last century to arise from the dead, and to appear in the habit of their own times, their great grand-children and they would be utter strangers to

one another. Their speech would be mutually unintelligible, their modes of behaviour uncouth, their apparel ridiculous. How much more, after the lapse of many centuries has intervened, and the scene shifted to a distant land, peopled by men of a different complexion, governed by different laws, and communicating thought by means of a different language.

One of the great pleasures arising from the study of ancient history, is to trace these differences, to contemplate the endless variety of the human mind, ever changing, still the same; to compare age with age, nation with nation, in order to excite admiration of the great Creator's wisdom and goodness, and to inspire love towards our fellow-creatures.

In examining the customs described in the context, let it be remembered, that they are the customs of men who lived upwards of three thousand years ago, who inhabited a different quarter of the globe, whose ideas, employments and pursuits had no manner of resemblance to ours, and who would be equally astonished, shocked and offended, were modern and European manners made to pass in review before them. And let it be farther remembered, that we speak of *customs* and *manners* only, and not of *morals*; of circumstances which from their own nature and the current of human affairs are liable to alteration, not of things in themselves eternal and immutable.

We have seen by what easy and natural progress, the providence of God carried on its purpose respecting the posterity of Abraham in general, and the royal line of the house of David in particular, and respecting a much higher object, to which this was a mere ministering servant, an harbinger and preparation, namely, "the manifestation of God in the flesh," for the redemption of a lost world. We have seen the commencement of the temporal rewards of virtue, and the dawning of everlasting joy. We are now to attend the progress of divine beneficence, of providential interposition, to crown the endeavours, and promote the happiness of the faithful.

Ruth has returned to her mother-in-law, laden with the fruits of honest industry, and provided with a supply for present necessity; cheered and comforted by the benevolence of a respectable stranger, and exulting in the prospect of future employment and success. Sweet are the communications of filial attachment and prosperity to the ear of maternal tenderness. It is not easy to conceive happiness more pure than was enjoyed that evening by these amiable and excellent women. Artless, undesigning Ruth, seems to look no farther than to the remainder of the harvest, the continuation of her labour, and of protection and encouragement from Boaz, and to the pleasure of supporting herself and aged parent by her own exertions. But Naomi, more experienced and intelligent, begins to build on the history of what Providence had done for them that day, a project of recompence to her beloved daughter, which her piety and affection so well merited, even no less than that of uniting her to Boaz in marriage. Was she to be blamed in this? By no means. It is criminal to outrun Providence, it is madness to think of constraining or bending it to our partial, selfish views. But it is wisdom, it is duty to exercise sagacity, to observe the ways of the Almighty, and to follow where he leads. The advice she gives in pursuance of this design, and Ruth's ready compliance, have, according to our ideas, a very extraordinary and questionable appearance, and seem rather calculated to defeat than to forward the end which they had in view; but modern refinement and licentiousness are little competent to judge of rustic simplicity and ancient purity. The proceeding was authorized by custom, was free from every taint of immorality, and had not, in the eyes of the world, even the semblance of indecency. The parties were all virtuous, they feared the Lord, they conformed to the laws and usages of their country, and Heaven smiled on their honest, unsullied intentions.

Had I the happiness, with a mind as pure, to address

ears as chaste, imaginations as undefiled, I should without hesitation or fear enter on the detail of the transaction as it stands on the record. But regard must be had to the prejudices of the times, to the propriety and decency which custom has established, remarking at the same time, that guilt is the parent of shame, and that an over-refined delicacy is too often the proof of a polluted heart.

The marriage of Boaz to Ruth, is the only instance we have of the application of a civil and political statute of long standing: which runs in these terms, “The land shall not be sold for ever; for the land is mine, for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land. If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold. And if the man have none to redeem it, and himself be able to redeem it; then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus unto the man to whom he sold it; that he may return unto his possession. But if he be not able to restore it to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it, until the year of jubilee: and in the jubilee it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession,” Lev. xxv. 23—28. And it stands in connexion with another law, circumstantially narrated. “If brethren dwell together, and one of them die and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband’s brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband’s brother unto her. And it shall be, that the first-born which she beareth, shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. And if the man like not to take his brother’s wife, then let his brother’s wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband’s brother refuseth to raise up unto his

brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her; then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed," Deut. xxv. 5—10. The whole spirit of the Mosaic dispensation considers the great Jehovah as the temporal sovereign of Israel, the land as his, the supremacy his. Every Israelite received his inheritance under the express stipulation that it should not be alienated from him and from his family for ever. That if, pressed by necessity, he should sell the whole or any part of it, he himself or his nearest of kindred might at any future period redeem it; that at the worst, in the year of jubilee, it should revert unpurchased to the ancient proprietor or his representative; and thereby succession and property be preserved distinct till the purposes of Heaven should be accomplished.

To give the law farther and more certain effect, it was enacted, that if the elder branch of the family and the heir of the inheritance should die childless, his next elder brother or nearest male relation should marry the widow; and that the issue of such marriage should be deemed to belong to the deceased, should assume his name, and succeed to his inheritance. Here then was the family of Elimelech ready to be extinguished: he and his two sons were all dead without posterity. Naomi was past child-bearing, the lands were ready to pass into the hands of strangers, for want of an heir, the hope of succession existing alone in the person of Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon. The measure therefore recommended by Naomi, and adopted by Ruth, was neither less nor more than a legal call on Boaz, as the supposed nearest kinsman of that branch of the family, to fulfil the duty of

that relation: Naomi not knowing, or having forgotten that there was a kinsman still nearer than him. Boaz, apprized of this, and respecting the laws of God and his country, preferably to his own passions and predeliction, refers the whole cause to a fair, open, judicial decision.

The conduct of Boaz throughout is exemplary and worthy of commendation: it bespeaks at once a wise and a good man. We have expatiated at considerable length on his character as a man of piety, regularity and humanity; we have bestowed on him the just tribute of admiration and respect, as a man of sensibility, as susceptible of pity for the miserable, of kindness to the stranger, of love for a deserving object. His character acquires much additional respectability from this last consideration, connected with the delicacy of his situation as a man and a citizen. His partiality to Ruth was clear and decided. In the confidence of virtue she had put herself entirely in his power; and what use did he make of this advantage? Never was father more tender of the reputation and chastity of his daughter. Every selfish consideration is sunk in sense of propriety, in respect to the divine authority, in solicitude about the honour and interest of the woman whom he loved. His partiality to Ruth was decided, but the right of redemption was in another, and he nobly disdains to avail himself of wealth, of power, of prior possession, to the prejudice of that right. What is the victory of the warlike hero compared to this triumph of a man over himself! What are trophies stained with blood, opposed to the silent applause of a good conscience, and the approbation of Almighty God! I see him bringing the cause to the determination of the judges, with the firmness of an honest man, with the anxiety of one in love, and with the resignation of one who feared the Lord, and committed all to the conduct of infinite wisdom. Characters shine by contrast. The nearer kinsman's versatility, disingenuousness, and insensibility to shame, serve as a foil to the firmness, candour, and delicacy of Boaz. When

the former hears of a good bargain, when he considers the advantage of his birth as the means of stepping into a vacant inheritance upon easy terms, he is all acquiescence and eagerness; but the moment he hears of the condition under which he is to purchase, of the assumption of the widow, of the relief of the miserable, of transmitting the name of Elimelech, not his own, to posterity, together with his lands, he instantly cools, submits to the infamy of having "his shoe pulled off," of being publicly spit upon, of having his house branded with a note of disgrace, and leaves the field open to a much better man than himself.

It is much easier to conceive than to describe the solicitude of the parties, while the cause was yet in dependence. What a blow to the heart of Boaz, when he, on whom the law bestowed the preference, declared his assent to the proposal; what disappointment to the hopes of Naomi, who had evidently set her mind on this match; what a damp thrown on the wishes and expectations of Ruth, on whose susceptible heart the goodness and generosity of Boaz must have made a deep impression! What relief to all, to hear him solemnly retract his assent, resign his right, and submit to the penalty. Those are the genuine delights of human life at which we arrive through danger and difficulty, which are the immediate gift of Heaven, which we have not employed improper arts to acquire, and which we can therefore enjoy without shame or remorse. The felicity which we are in too great haste to grasp, which we pursue independent of God and religion, which by crooked paths we arrive at, proves at best a cloud in the embrace, often a serpent full of deadly poison in the bosom. The very delays which Providence interposes, the sacrifices which a sense of duty offers up, the mortifications to which conscience submits, enhance the value, and heighten the relish of our lawful comforts.

Let us apply this observation to the three leading personages in this interesting tale. Naomi sits down,

and thus meditates with herself. “ With what fair prospects did I begin the world; the wife of a prince, a mother in Israel, among the first in rank, in wealth, in expectation. But how early were my prospects clouded! Driven by famine from the land of promise, reduced to seek shelter and subsistence among strangers, but supported and refreshed by the company and tenderness of the husband of my tender years, and the presence and improvement of my children: finding a new home in the land of Moab, my family respected in a foreign country, reputably allied, comfortably settled. But the cup of prosperity again dashed from my hand; husband and sons, *the desire of my eyes, taken away with a stroke*; Canaan and Moab, rendered equally a place of exile, robbed of that which rendered all places a home, all situations a pleasure; deserted of all but Heaven, and a good young woman, once the partner of my joys, now my sister in affliction: fleeing back for the relief of my anguish to my native soil and city, and mortified at finding myself there more a stranger than among aliens; providentially raised into notice and consequence again, my affectionate daughter nobly allied, the name of Elimelech about to be revived, and his house built up! What a strangely chequered life! Naomi and Mara in perpetual succession! But every thing is ordered wisely and well of Him who sees all things at one view; the latter end is better than the beginning; behold good arising out of evil; the designs of the Most High hastening to their accomplishment. All is of the Lord of Hosts, who is *wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working*.”

The reflections of the Moabiteess may be supposed to run in this channel. “ What a blessing for me that I ever became united to an Israelitish family, whatever pangs it may otherways have cost me! But for this I should have been, like my fathers, a worshipper of stocks and stones, the work of men’s hands; a stranger to rational piety, to inward peace! Happy loss, which procured for me this unspeakably great gain! propi-

tious poverty, which sent, which drove me out, in quest of treasures inestimable; blessed exile, which conducted me to a habitation under the wings of the Almighty! What real gain is true godliness! It has more than the promise, it has the enjoyment of the life that now is. Mysterious Providence, that directed my doubtful, trembling steps to glean in that field, that has in a few short weeks made such a change in my condition, that has raised me from the lowest, meanest, most forlorn of dependants, to the highest state of affluence, ease and respectability; and transplanted me from the vast howling deserts of idolatry and ignorance, to the fair and fertile regions of knowledge, of purity, of hope, and joy! To comfort and maintain a mother like Naomi, to find such a friend and husband as Boaz! It is life from the dead. It is of that God who has taught me to know, and to choose him as my God, and who will never fail nor forsake them who put their trust in him."

Boaz too finds his situation greatly improved, rejoices and gives God thanks. "My wealth was great, my garners full, my man servants and maidens numerous, dutiful and affectionate, but I had no one to share my prosperity with me, I was solitary in the midst of a multitude: like Adam in Paradise, incapable of enjoyment, because destitute of a companion, an help-meet for me; but God hath provided for me a virtuous woman, whose price is above rubies. My house has now received its brightest ornament, my family its firmest support, my estate its most prudent and faithful dispenser. I have done my duty. I have respected the majesty of the law. I have followed where Providence led the way, and I have my reward, in the peace of my own mind, in the possession of a wise and good woman, in the blessing of that God who has done all things for me, and who does all things wisely and well."

Behold a match formed immediately by the hand of Providence, through the happy concurrence of little incidental circumstances; a match built, not on the brit-

tle foundation of sordid interest, but on the solid basis of mutual affection, of generosity, of wisdom, of religion; a match pregnant with what consequences to Beth-lehem-Judah, to all Israel, to the human race!

From this advantage of ground, how pleasant it is to trace the sweetly meandering course of the river of prophecy and promise united, toward the vast, the immeasurable ocean of accomplishment. Now the tribe of Judah is rising into consequence, now the royal sceptre is ready to be put into his hand, never to depart thence "till Shiloh come, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end: to whom the gathering of the people shall be." Now the star of Jacob begins to appear. Now the "tender plant" begins to rear its head, and the "root out of the dry ground to spring up; it buds and blossoms as the rose, and its smell is as the smell of Lebanon."

But what eye can discover, what created spirit take in the whole extent of "God's purpose and grace given in Christ Jesus before the world began," and terminating in the final and everlasting redemption of a lost world through faith in his blood? The veil of eternity is drawn over it; "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," 1 Cor. ii. 9. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2.

The history of Ruth, will be brought to a period next Lord's day.

You see, men and brethren, the object which is closely kept in view, through every era of time, under all dispensations, and by whatever instruments. The work of God cannot stand still, his purpose cannot be defeated. One generation of men goeth and another cometh, but every succeeding generation contributes to the furtherance of his design; and, whether know-

ingly or ignorantly, voluntarily or reluctantly, all fulfil his pleasure.

None are forsaken of Providence but such as are false to themselves, and till we have done what is incumbent upon us, we have neither warrant nor encouragement to look up and wish, to expect and pray.

Nothing is dishonourable but what is sinful; poverty that is not the effect of idleness, prodigality, or vice, has nothing shameful in it; the gleaner behind the reapers may be as truly dignified as the lord of the harvest. Let lordly wealth cease from pride, and virtuous obscurity and indigence from dejection and despair.

Waste not time, spirits, and thought in airy speculation about imaginary situations, but try to make the most of that in which infinite wisdom has seen meet to place thee.

Disdain to envy any one, at least until thou hast thoroughly examined into the estate of him whom thou art disposed to envy.

He is destitute of the happiest preparation for the relish and enjoyment of prosperity, who has not arrived at it through the path of adversity. To receive with thankfulness, to enjoy with moderation, to resign with cheerfulness, to endure with patience, is the highest pitch of human virtue.

Men are often fulfilling a plan of Providence, without intending, or even being conscious of it. They are acting a double part at the same instant; the one private and personal, local and transitory, the other public, comprehensive, and permanent: they may be building up at once a private family, and the church of God, carrying on and maintaining the succession to an inheritance to a throne, and ministering to the extension and progress of a kingdom which shall never be moved or shaken.

In the kingdom of nature, there is high and low, mountain and valley, sameness with diversity: in the kingdom of Providence, there is difference of rank and

station, of talent and accomplishment, of fortune and success, but a mutual and necessary connexion and dependence. In the kingdom of grace, there is diversity of gifts and offices, but the same Spirit; and so in the kingdom of glory, different degrees of lustre, as stars differ one from another, but one universal glory, of which all the redeemed are together partakers, all being kings and priests unto God. Throughout the whole, there is a gradation which at once pleases and confounds, that depresses and exalts, that inspires contentment, and teaches to aspire, that now attracts to the pure fountain of uncreated light, and now repels the bold inquirer to his native darkness and distance again.

It is pleasant to survey from the exceeding high mountain where the christian tabernacle is pitched, the course of that river whose streams make glad the city of our God. What will it be, from the summit of yonder eternal hills, to contemplate the whole extent of Emanuel's land, "watered with the pure river of water of life;" to mingle with the nations of them that are saved, as they expatiate through the blissful groves planted with the tree of life: to converse with the distinguished personages who shine on this hallowed page, and shall then shine in immortal lustre; to reap with Boaz, a richer harvest than ever waved on the plains of Bethlehem-Judah; to assist Naomi in raising her triumphant song of praise; and to rejoice with Ruth, and with one another, in our joint reception into God's everlasting kingdom, in our common admission into "the general assembly and church of the first-born." Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of our God. We have heard of them with the hearing of the ear, may our eyes be blessed with the sight of them. May "the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne lead us to living fountains of waters, and God wipe away all tears from our eyes." "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

HISTORY OF RUTH.

LECTURE XIV.

So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son. And the woman said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age. For thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi, and they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.—RUTH iv. 13—17.

THERE is an obvious resemblance between the general plan of the divine providence, and the separate and detached parts of it. The life of almost every good man exhibits virtue for a season struggling with difficulty, overwhelmed with distress, but emerging, rising, triumphing at length. Through much tribulation the christian must enter into the kingdom of God, and on his way be often in heaviness through manifold temptations. It is the wise ordinance of infinite goodness. Opposition rouses, calls forth the latent powers of the soul; success is heightened by the danger to

which we were exposed, by the trouble which it cost us, by the pains we took; antecedent labour sweetens rest. Hence, the passages of our own lives which we most fondly recollect and relate, and those in the lives of others which most deeply engage and interest us, are the scenes of depression, mortification and pain through which we have passed. The perils of a battle, the horrors of a shipwreck, so dreadful at the moment, become the source of lasting joy, when the tempest has ceased to roar, and the confused noise of the warrior is hushed into silence.

Fiction, in order to please, is, accordingly, forced to borrow the garb of truth. The hero's sufferings, the lover's solicitude and uncertainty, the parent's anguish, the patriot's conflict, are the subject of the drama. When the ship has reached her desired haven, when the cloud disperses, when the contest is decided, the curtain must drop. Periods of prosperity cannot be the theme of history.

The vast, general system, in like manner, exhibits "the whole creation groaning and travelling in pain together;" interest clashing with interest, spirit rising up against spirit, one purpose defeating another, universal nature apparently on the verge of confusion; chaos and ancient night threatening to resume their empire: but without knowledge, design or co-operation, nay, in defiance of concert and co-operation, the whole is making a regular, steady progress; the muddy stream is working itself pure; the discordant mass is bound as in chains of adamant, the wrath of man is praising God; every succeeding era and event is explaining and confirming that which preceded it: all is tending towards one grand consummation which shall collect, adjust, unite and crown the scattered parts, and demonstrate, to the conviction of every intelligent being, that all was, is, and shall be very good.

Finite capacity can contemplate and comprehend but a few fragments at most: and scripture has furnished

us with a most delicious one, in the little history, of which I have now read the conclusion. The story of Ruth has been considered, by every reader of taste, as a perfect model in that species of composition. It will stand the test of the most rigid criticism, or rather, is calculated to give instruction and law to criticism. With your patience I will attempt a brief analysis of it.

1st. The *subject* is great and important beyond all that heathen antiquity presents: the foundation and establishment of the regal dignity in the house of David, the type and ancestor of the Messiah. An event in which not one age, one nation, one interest is concerned, but the whole extent of time, the whole human race, the temporal, the spiritual, the everlasting interests of mankind. What is the demolition of Troy, or the settlement of Æneas in Latium, compared to this? *Paradise Lost* itself must give place to this glorious opening of *Paradise Regained*.

2d. The *story* is perfect and complete in itself; or, as the critic would say, has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Elimelech is driven by famine into banishment, dies in the land of Moab, and leaves his family in distress. Here the action commences. Naomi and Ruth, united by propinquity, by affection and by distress, are induced to return to Bethlehem-Judah, in hope of effecting a redemption of the estate which had belonged to the family, but under the pressure of necessity had been alienated. Their reception, deportment, and progress, form the great body of the piece. The marriage of Boaz and Ruth, and the birth of Obed is the conclusion of it.

3d. The *conduct of the plot* is simple, natural and easy. No extraneous matter, personage, or event is introduced, from first to last: the incidents follow, and arise out of one another, without force, without effort. No extraordinary agency appears, because none is requisite; the ordinary powers of nature, and the ordinary course of things, are adequate to the effect intend-

ed to be produced. There is no violent or sudden transition, but a calm, rational, progressive change from deep sorrow to moderated affliction, to composed resignation, to budding hope, to dawning prosperity, to solicitous prosecution, to partial success, to final and full attainment.

The discovery of Ruth, of her character, of her virtues, of her relation to Boaz, is in the same happy style of natural simplicity and ease. On her part we see no indecent eagerness to bring herself forward, no clamorous publication of her distresses or pretensions, no affected disguise or concealment to attract observation or provoke inquiry: on his, there is no vehemence of exclamation, no hastiness of resolution; but in both, the calmness of good minds, the satisfaction which conscious virtue enjoys, in the unexpected discovery of mutual attractions and kindred worth. The situations are interesting, affecting, governed by the laws of nature and probability, and consonant to every day's experience.

4th. The *sentiments* are just, arising out of the situations, adapted to the characters, guarded equally from apathy and violence. The pathetic expostulation of Ruth with her mother-in-law, when she proposed a separation, is, in particular, a master-piece of native eloquence: at hearing it, the heart is melted into tenderness, the tear of sympathy rushes to the eye, nature feels and acknowledges the triumph of virtue. The sentiment of impassioned sorrow glows with equal vehemence on the lips of Naomi, and excite in the bosom of sensibility, pity mingled with respect. In Boaz we praise and admire unostentatious generosity, dignified condescension, honest, undisguised affection, a sense of inflexible, undeviating justice.

5th. The *characters* are nicely discriminated, boldly designed, and uniformly supported. The grief of Naomi is verbose, impetuous and penetrating; that of Ruth calm, silent, melting, modest. The plans of the

mother are sagacious, comprehensive; the result of reflection, of experience; they indicate skill, ability, resolution, perseverance. Those of the daughter are artless, innocent; the suggestion of the moment, the effusion of the heart; indicate candour, sincerity, conscious, unblushing, unsuspecting rectitude.

In Boaz the struggle between inclination, propriety, prudence and justice is happily designed, and forcibly executed: it is a painting from nature, and therefore cannot fail to please. His openness and fair dealing also, as was observed in a former Lecture, are finely contrasted with the selfishness, insincerity and unsteadiness of the nearer kinsman.

The character of the servant who was over the reapers, though we have but a slight sketch of it, discovers the hand of a master, the hand of truth and nature. We see in it, the beautiful and interesting portrait of unabashed, unassuming inferiority, of authority undisfigured by insolence or severity, the happy medium between power and dependence, the link in the scale of society which connects the wealthy lord with the honest labourer, the friend and companion of both.

The rest of the characters are classed in groups, but discover a characteristic and decided distinction. We have the inquisitiveness, curiosity, hard-heartedness and indifference of an idle provincial town; the good-nature, hospitality, candour and cheerfulness of the country.

The compliments of congratulation presented to Boaz, on his marriage, and those addressed to Naomi on the birth of her grandson, clearly evince the different train of thought and feeling which dictated them, and mark beyond the possibility of mistake the sex and sentiment of the addressors. In a word, the ideas expressed by the several characters in this sacred drama, are so peculiarly their own, that no reader of ordinary discernment needs to be told, who it is that speaks: the sentiments cannot possibly be transferred from one to another.

6th. The *manners* are delineated with the same felicity of pencil. We have a faithful representation of those that are permanent and founded in nature: and of those which are local and temporary. When I observe these Bethlehemites flocking round the old woman and her outlandish daughter, plying them and one another with questions, circulating the leer and the whisper, I could suppose myself in one of the gossiping villages which surround this metropolis, whose inhabitants feed on rumour, exercise no principle but curiosity, employ no member but the tongue, or the feet, in hunting after materials for that employment. In the innocent festivity, the uncomplaining toil, the contented simplicity, the unaffected benevolence, the unprofessing piety of that field of reapers, I have mingled a thousand and a thousand times. It was the delight of childhood, it is the unpainful, the undepressing retrospect of age.

We have a representation equally faithful and just of customs and manners which are local and temporary; some of which excite our astonishment, some shock our delicacy, and some provoke our mirth. Such are the modes of courtship here described, the transfer of property, the forms of judicial procedure, the terms of familiar address and friendly communication; and the like. These, having no intrinsic moral excellence or turpitude, are the object of neither praise nor censure. To trace their origin, or explain their nature and design, may be an innocent amusement, but it were unjust to explode them as absurd, or to run them down as ridiculous. The antiquarian will revere them for their age, the philosopher will investigate them as opening a new path to the knowledge of the human heart, the philanthropist will deal with them gently, because they are the harmless peculiarities of his fellow-creatures, and piety will respect them as presenting another view of the endless variety discoverable in all the ways and works of the great Creator.

In the permanent manners of mankind we see the eternal sameness of the human mind, which no change of climate, times, government, education, can alter; a sameness as discernable and as fixed as the number of eyes, arms, and fingers peculiar to the species. In those which are local and transient, we behold the infinite and endless variety of the human powers, which no stability and uniformity of law, instruction, discipline, interest, example, can arrest and fix; a variety as discernable, as unsteady, as unaccountable, as the different shades of complexion, the conformation of feature, the measurements of stature, the fluctuations of thought. Every thing satisfies, every thing confounds.

Once more, the *language* of this charming little epic history, is plain and perspicuous, elegant, yet unadorned, nervous, yet chaste, simple, yet not mean or vulgar. It consists of narration and dialogue, the former possessing the most exquisite degree of grace and ease, the latter of vivacity and force. There is no obscurity of idea, no redundancy of expression, no appearance of labour, no artful polish, no tinsel of words, no disgusting tediousness, no affected conciseness. Like the general code of scripture, it is capable of neither increase nor diminution, without sustaining an injury.

But the least merit of the piece, is its excellency as a composition. It forms a most material member of the great building of God; an important link in the chain of Providence; an interesting and instructive chapter in the history of redemption. The union of Boaz and Ruth, can never lose its influence, never spend its force. When nature expires, and all these things are dissolved, the offspring of that pair “shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.” From that root behold a branch has arisen, to which “the nations of them that are saved” continually resort, under whose shadow

they repose, whose fruit is the source and support of a divine life, whose "leaves are for the healing of the nations." Let the Jew read this sacred page, and glory in his ancestry; let the scholar read it, and improve his taste, and extend his knowledge; let the rustic read it, and praise his humble pursuits and innocent delights: let the sons of poverty and the daughters of affliction read it, and cease from despair, let them learn to "trust in the Lord, and to do good;" let the christian read it, and "hold fast the beginning of his confidence," and "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

The last obvious remark on the history, sorry I am to say it, is not highly honourable to human nature. While Naomi was poor, and friendless, and forlorn, she met with little sympathy, with little countenance; she was permitted to depend for subsistence on the miserable, unproductive industry of a woman weak and wretched as herself; but no sooner is she connected with "a mighty man of wealth," become a mother to Boaz, than the whole city is seeking to her; her own sex, in particular, we see entering into all her feelings, flattering all her natural propensities, accommodating themselves to her little wishes and desires, and trying to compensate their former coldness and neglect by every art of attention, officiousness and zeal. Base spirit! base world! Behold kindness pressed upon a man, just in proportion as he has no need of it; behold him oppressed with new friends, because he has already got too many, caressed by those who lately knew him not, praised and flattered to his face, by the very tongues which maligned and censured him in his absence. But that man is left to continue poor, because he is poor. He finds no support because he wants it, he stands unbefriended because he has no friend. Shame on the fawning sycophants that only flutter about in fair weather, that only frequent the mansions of the rich and great, that turn with the tide, that can despise ragged poverty, and offer incense to ermined villainy.

Let us turn with contempt from the sight, and take a last parting look of one of the worthiest, best, happiest of human beings.—Naomi nursing and cherishing her little grandson in her bosom. If there be bliss on earth, she now enjoyed it. Her honest scheme had succeeded, the name of her beloved husband was revived, and his house begun to be built up; her amiable and beloved daughter was nobly rewarded for her tenderness and attachment; the inheritance of Elimelech is redeemed, and reverted to its proper channel; the wisdom and goodness of Providence are fully justified, and a prospect of felicity and honour is opened which knew no bounds. The miseries of a whole life are done away in one hour, converted into blessings, blessings heightened and improved by the memory of past woes; the name of Mara is for ever obliterated, and the original, the suitable, the prophetic name of Naomi restored and confirmed. The sensibilities of a *Grand-mother* are peculiarly pure and delicate respecting infant offspring. All good women are fond of children, to whomsoever they belong, how much more of their own, whom they bare with sorrow, and have brought up with solicitude: but “that I should live to see my child’s child, my being multiplied; dropping into the grave, yet reviving in that infant. I feel myself immortal; this babe will live to put his hand upon my eyes, and then I shall not feel the oppression of death; if he survive I cannot all die.” “*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.*”

The Spirit of God has drawn a veil over the feelings of the mother herself, and the expression of them, and left it to imagination to figure the felicity of Ruth the widow of Mahlon, the daughter of Naomi, the wife of Boaz, the mother of Obed, in surveying the changes of her life, in comparing what she was with what she is.

—And thus have we finished what was intended, in discoursing on the book of Ruth. We have considered

it, as a beautiful, because natural representation of human life; as a curious and interesting detail of important facts; and as an essential, constituent part of the plan of redemption. It happily connects the history of the Israelitish judges with that of their kings, and is obviously blended with both: and while it demonstrates the care of Providence, in fulfilling the promises made to Abraham, the friend of God, in prolonging his race, in multiplying his seed, in making kings to arise out of him, it unfolds the more enlarged and comprehensive purpose of the Eternal Mind; it points directly forward to that "seed in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed;" it shows the subserviency of all that preceded, to the evangelical dispensation; it breathes good will to men. The reception of Ruth, a Gentile, within the pale of the church of the living God; her advancement to honour, her participation of the privileges of a mother in Israel, are a happy prefiguration of the admission of the whole Gentile world within the bond of God's covenant. We see the work of God still going forward and prospering; the work of mercy enlarging, extending its sphere; all bending forward to that grand consummation, when "Israel too shall be saved," and the ancient people of God brought into a communication of the blessings of the gospel, together with "the fulness of the Gentile nations;" when there shall be "one shepherd and one sheep-fold;" when Jew and Gentile shall arise together from the dead, because "Christ doth give them life."

The birth of Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David, brings the history of the world down to the year two thousand six hundred and ninety-seven, from the creation, and before Christ, one thousand three hundred and seven, and conducts us to the eve of the establishment of kingly power in Israel.

How many generations of men have passed in review before us, in the course of these few years evening exercises from Adam down to Boaz! What changes

has the audience undergone, since first it collected in this view! What deep and affecting changes will a few more seasons produce! The turning of the page will present a new preacher, new hearers, a different plan, a different arrangement, different interests, different feelings. The separation of this night may be final and permanent. We bend together, gracious God, with wonder and gratitude before thy throne. Spared together so many years longer, "cumberers of the ground" that we are; our bodies preserved in health, our minds in tranquility: blessed with friendship, blest with sufficiency, blest with the means of improvement, blest with hope! Ah, we are unworthy of the least of thy favours, and we have been distinguished by the choicest and best! Make us to feel thy goodness and our own unworthiness; help us to live more to thy glory. As our interest in the world diminishes, as years increase, as grey hairs multiply, as friends depart, as comforts fail, as eternity advances, let our faith strengthen, let our spirits rise to thee, let our prospects brighten, let our ardour after immortality kindle. The nearer we approach to thee, let our resemblance to thee become more apparent; let the spirit of heaven, the spirit of the blessed Jesus, be imparted to us, that, living and dying, we may edify the world, be a blessing to all connected with us, and still enjoy inward peace. And as we separate from time to time, may it be in the sweet expectation of meeting together in the regions of everlasting purity, love and joy. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirits. Amen."

HISTORY OF HANNAH,

THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

LECTURE XV.

Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of Mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. And this man went up out of his city yearly, to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of Hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there. And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions. But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion: for he loved Hannah; but the Lord had shut up her womb. And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb. And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord; so she provoked her; therefore she wept and did not eat. Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? And why eatest thou not? And why is thy heart grieved? Am not I better to thee than ten sons? —1 SAMUEL i. 1—8.

SIMILAR causes ever have produced, and ever will produce similar effects. You may shift the scene

from one age and country to another, but like beings, the same spirit, the same passions and pursuits arise continually to view. The difference between period and period, nation and nation, city and city, man and man, consists merely in a few arbitrary customs, various forms of speech and modes of behaviour; but the great principles of human nature, the great moving springs of human actions are universal and invariable. What then is so absurd as to tax others with absurdity, only because their language, manners or prejudices do not exactly coincide with our own?

As the principles of our nature, so the rules of the divine government are similar and uniform. The views, passions and interests of men are the hinges on which the mighty engine revolves. Every little individual moves and acts in his own proper sphere, like the stars in the firmament of heaven, but all move and act together under the influence of one great commanding power, which animates and directs the whole. Every one possesses, and feels, and exercises its separate intelligence, and all are, at the same time, checked, impelled, sustained by one supreme intelligence which is above all, through all and in all.

The justest and most accurate, the most useful and instructive representations of human life and conduct are to be found in this divine record. The actors in this sacred and interesting drama, are personages of the very highest distinction, patriarchs and prophets, legislators and kings; but we are never permitted, for a single moment, to forget, that they are also men. In their form and features we behold our own image reflected. In the emotions by which they were agitated, in the objects which they pursued, we recognize our own aversions and desires, our own pursuits and attainments, our own mortifications and success.

We are now entering on the history of one of the greatest among the prophets, and that history delineated by his own pencil. He begins it with a description of

his father's family, previous to his own birth, and a faithful representation of the different characters of which it was composed. And this will furnish ample matter for the present Lecture.

Elkanah, the father of Samuel, from the genealogical deduction here presented, was a Levite of the family of the Kohathites, and is denominated a man of Ramathaim-zophim, of Mount Ephraim, from his being born or residing at that city.

Men of eminence, as has often been observed, confer celebrity on cities and countries; but poor is that merit which is derived from no other source but a man's parentage, or the place of his birth. The Levitical tribe was scattered over the whole country, and during the disorderly times which succeeded the death of Joshua, their residence and their services seem to have been regulated by no certain and fixed standard. His ancestors for many generations are mere names in the historic page; shadows without a substance; and he himself borrows the fame and lustre in which he is transmitted to us, from the reputation, ability and distinction of his nobler son; whose children, in their turn, sink into infamy, and thence into oblivion.

The first article in Elkanah's domestic economy presented to our consideration is an imputation upon his wisdom, if not upon his piety. "He had two wives." Polygamy, or plurality of wives, was a practice at that time indeed connived at, but no where, and at no period, sanctioned by a law: a practice not indeed condemned by statutes and punishments, but sufficiently condemned by effects and consequences. It is of very little importance to inquire whether it be forbidden, if it can be proved unreasonable, unwise, inexpedient. And for such proof we have but to recur to the domestic history of Abraham, of Jacob, of Elkanah, and of every family in which it prevailed. Hannah was probably the prior wife, and it is presumable that the disappointment of not having children by her suggested

the hazardous experiment of a double marriage; and the issue demonstrated that every deviation from the path of rectitude leads directly to its own chastisement.

The mortification of Hannah, already too much to bear, is grievously embittered by the assumption of a rival in the affection of her husband, and becomes intolerable by the fruitfulness of that rival. And thus, by one ill-advised step, all the parties are rendered unhappy, and that without any high degree of criminality on any side. Elkanah's peace is incessantly disturbed by the mutual jealousy, and bitterness, and strife of those conjoined, who separately might have contributed to soothe and soften the cares of life. The pleasure of having children is marred and impaired to Peninnah, by the ill-disguised partiality of the father of her children, to another. The misery of barrenness is dreadfully aggravated to Hannah, by the cruel mocking and taunts of her merciless adversary. And what became of the children all the while? Were they likely to be well and wisely educated, amidst all these domestic jarrings? Hated and opposed by more than a step-mother's rancour, spoiled by the over indulgence of maternal tenderness, striving to compensate that rancour and hatred; secretly caressed, openly neglected by an embarrassed father, who was now afraid to express, and now to conceal the honest emotions of nature. It is not vice only that destroys human comfort. And if mere imprudence involves a man in so many difficulties and distresses, how dreadful must it be to bear continually in one's bosom the burning coal of an ill conscience.

Happily for Elkanah and his house, family discord did not extinguish family religion; he went up regularly with all his household to worship the Lord at Shiloh, at the great yearly festivals. The law commanded the attendance of the males only, on such occasions; but whether it were that a higher sense of piety induced him to appear before Jehovah rejoicing with all that

were his, or whether he hoped to allay the ferment of fierce angry spirits, in the soul-composing exercises of devotion, both his wives attended him to the service of the sanctuary, and sat down together with him at the sacrifice of peace-offering. It was wisely and well intended, the fire of malignity fades and dies in presence of the pure flame of love divine, as material fire is absorbed and extinguished when exposed to the rays of the glorious orb of day. It was well intended, had he not reason to hope that Hannah would forget her misery, and Peninnah her pride in the presence of God; that the power of religion, and the prospects of immortality might haply unite those whom passion and interest had severed. But if such were his intention, he succeeded not. And that he succeeded not, is to be imputed, in part, to his own weakness. The beloved wife must be distinguished by a "worthy portion," and to render it more insulting, at a public festival, and before envious, watchful eyes, those of Peninnah, and her sons and daughters. Thus, through some mixture of folly in ourselves, through the craftiness and malignity of another, or through some untowardness of arrangement, over which we had no power, and neither could foresee nor prevent, the best designs miscarry, medicine is converted into poison, and religion is made a minister of wrath and unrighteousness.

Who does not here recollect a certain "coat of many colours," which cost so dear to him who gave, and to him who wore it? Who is not warned to guard against, or at least to conceal partial affections, where claims are equal? Who does not feel the importance of bringing to the altar of God, a spirit elevated above all temporal considerations!

Not only was the good-natured intention of Elkanah frustrated, but the worship of God was profaned; and wretched indeed must be the state of that family, where religion not only fails to conciliate, but tends to alienate, irritate and inflame. "Elkanah loved Hannah,

but the Lord had shut up her womb.”—The absence of one desired blessing renders the possession of a thousand others tasteless and insipid. The moderating hand of eternal Providence rectifies the disorders, and counteracts the violence, of human passion; preserves the balance from a preponderancy too great, or too lasting, on either side; and conducts all to the happiest issue at length.

But an evil which comes immediately from Heaven is by that very consideration rendered both tolerable and salutary. The Lord can do nothing but what is right; in wrath he remembers love; “he afflicts not willingly nor grieves the children of men, not for his pleasure, but their profit.” But alas, there was mingled in Hannah’s cup, an ingredient which converted the whole into wormwood and gall; “her adversary also provoked her sore for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb.” What relish had now the double portion, though the token of a fond husband’s unabated kindness? The insulting words and looks of her pitiless “adversary” are as vinegar upon nitre. How dreadful to have a calamity which was incessantly, though secretly preying upon her vitals, incessantly thrown in her teeth; home rendered a burthen; the place of sacrifice, a habitation of discord; fire snatched with unhallowed hands from the altar of Jehovah to kindle the gloomy fire of hell? There needs no tormenting fiend to ascend from the bottomless pit, armed with scorpions, to plague and torture wretched mortals; see, they are armed like furies one against another, they exult in one another’s pain; relentless, remorseless, they “say not it is enough.”

Dreadful to think, this angry vengeful spirit continued to agitate and torment these unhappy women for many years together; and what is hell, but a state of unabating, growing animosity and hatred? “As he went up year by year, when she went up to the house

of the Lord, so she provoked her." In female bosoms can such malignity dwell? Ah, what so bad as the good corrupted, perverted! Behold a rancour which no time could enfeeble, no sense of shame restrain, and which the sacredness of the sanctuary served only to embitter and inflame! Can it be possible, merciful Father, can it be possible, that such a fell spirit should ever have accompanied any of us to thy house of prayer? Can "the same tongue utter blessing and cursing?" Dare we say "we love God, whom we have not seen, while we hate" or dispise "a brother" a sister "whom we have seen?" "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting," Psalm xxxix. 23, 24.

It is greatly to the honour of Hannah, that all this cruel and insulting treatment drew from her no indecent return. Though grieved in spirit, provoked, fretted beyond all enduring, we hear of no furious appeal to the partial tenderness of her husband, no railing for railing, no rash malediction, no furious threatening of revenge. It is not easy to govern the spirit; it is not always possible to command the temper under offence and insult; but the tongue is in every one's power, improper words admit of no defence, and rage is but a poor apology for abuse and blasphemy. But she pines away in silent sorrow. "She wept, and did not eat." These seasons of rejoicing before the Lord, these times of refreshing to every other daughter of Israel, were to her days of heaviness and wo. What signifies a large portion to one who has no appetite? What is the prosperity of her people, to one, who, like a dried branch, is cut off from all interest in posterity, who sees the name and honours of her beloved husband passing away to the children of another, the children of one who hated her? Alas, the spirit of devotion itself is checked and repressed by the incessant, unrelenting

stings of envy and jealousy; life is become a burden to her.

The deep affliction with which she was overwhelmed could not escape the attentive eyes of Elkanah. Though her tongue said nothing, her eyes, her tears, her dejection, her abstinence, her sighs betrayed abundantly the anguish of her soul. "Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah why weepest thou, and why eatest thou not, and why is thy heart grieved? Am not I better to thee than ten sons?" To what distress has the good man reduced himself? Now he severely feels the effect of his own imprudence, and laments his having tried the dangerous experiment, which robbed him of all domestic quiet, disturbed the festivity of the solemn rendezvous at Shiloh, and threatened to produce one day some tragical event in his family.

Sympathy, if it does not wholly dispel our miseries, pours at least a temporary balm into the wound, and "soothes pain for a while." Hannah becomes composed, and the feast is concluded. There is still one refuge left for the miserable, one remedy against despair, one friend able and ready to help in every time of trouble; and our eyes with complacency follow the mourner, not into her secret retirement, to spend her sorrow in unavailing tears, or to curse the day in which she was born; not into the round of giddy dissipation, to drown reflection and anxiety, in the poisoned chalice of intemperate mirth and jollity; but to the place of prayer, but to the door of mercy, but to the dawn of hope.

We shall presently find, that what related to the externals of God's worship was at that time but badly conducted in Israel, the "sons of Eli were sons of Belial," they "know not the Lord." But be the minister who he will, the word and service of God cannot be rendered of none effect. Not only the spirit of piety, but a sense of common decency was

now lost in the Levitical priesthood; when it pleased God to make this very afflicted woman, the means in his hand, to restore the dignity, purity and importance of the sacred function, to revive the decayed interests of religion, and to bring forward the great events which are so intimately connected with the things which belong to our everlasting peace.

When we look into human life, whether as exhibited on the hallowed page of inspiration, or by our own observation and experience, we shall find that most of the “ills which flesh is heir to,” may easily be traced up to some imprudence, heedlessness, or transgression of the man himself, who, before he was aware, found himself involved in difficulties and distresses, the native effects of his own misconduct, but which he foresaw not, apprehended not, and which he never could intend. I know how poor a consolation it is, to tell a man, “you have nobody but yourself to blame,” and to upbraid him with the warning which you gave him, and he would not take; but it is not, for that, useless for one to discover the source, cause, and progress of his calamity. The case must be bad indeed, or his eyes must have been opened very late, or his “heart hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,” if he cannot turn to some good account the reflections of maturer judgment, the admonitions and chastisement of experience, the pain and remorse of an *ill* conscience, or the mistakes and wanderings of a *good* one.

There are steps in conduct which are irretrievable, and therefore ought not to be tampered with. The excessive use of the most wholesome food, will at length overwhelm the strongest constitution; the occasional application of what is doubtful or unwholesome, may undermine or waste it, but poison is certain death; and the sagacity of a brute, the understanding of a child, is sufficient to distinguish between poison and food, perhaps not between poison and medicine.

To how many gracious, social, civil, and moral pur-

poses, may not the wise and proper use of religious services be applied? The man who has performed with understanding and feeling, the *devotions of the closet*, will issue from it in a higher state of preparation for every duty of life. Filled with veneration for his heavenly Father, “who seeth,” and with whom he has been conversing “in secret,” he breathes good will to man. The emotions of every unkind, ungentle, unjust affection are stifled, extinguished, forgotten. The principles of benevolence and benignity have acquired new life and energy. He is disposed to meet the ills of life with more firmness and fortitude, and to enjoy its blessings with a more exquisite relish. Hannah having poured out her soul to God, “went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.” The devotion of the morning will prove the best assistant toward conducting the business of the coming day; and that of the evening, the happiest review and improvement of the past. From him who habitually begins and ends every thing with God, you may reasonably expect the fruits of a good and honest heart, “speech alway with grace, seasoned with salt,” and order in conduct, more than from other men; more works of mercy, more fair dealing, more steadiness in friendship; and less of the rancour of opposition, less of the self-sufficiency of pride, less of the malignity of envy; for the love of God absorbs all these baleful, malignant fires.

The *devotions of the family*, in like manner, produce the happiest effects within that sphere. How soothing, how cementing, how conciliating they are! Does common calamity press? It is alleviated, it is sanctified, it is done away, when the “care is cast upon God,” when the burthen is transferred to a Father in heaven, who stands engaged to remove it, or to render it a blessing. Is domestic prosperity abounding, increasing? what an additional lustre, value, sweetness, does it derive from union, from piety, from a common sense of

obligation and dependence? Have offences come? Has peace been disturbed? Are the bonds which united husband and wife, parent and child, brother and brother, master and servant, unhappily broken? The moment that the healing address, “*Our Father*, who art in heaven,” reaches the ear, every soul is peace, the spirit of love pervades the whole, and the voice of discord is heard no more. When pardon is implored from him whom all have offended, the stony heart relents, melts, forgives, for he needs to be forgiven.

The influence of *public worship* likewise, where it has not degenerated into mere form, is the strongest cement of society. It serves to consolidate men of various ranks and conditions, with their several talents and abilities, into one compact, efficient, well-organized body, ready to act with one heart and one soul, in the cause of God and their country. Little shades of difference, in men truly good, will unite instead of disjoining. Our great national assemblies are obliged, by law, to open their sittings for public business, by acts of public devotion. The reason and intention of the law, and of the practice founded upon it, are abundantly obvious. If the effect does not follow to the extent that might be wished—it must be concluded that the devotional part of the sitting is neglected; that formality has extinguished the flame; or that difference of religious sentiment, or what is still worse, indifference to all religion, mar and weaken, and distract the whole. The prevalency of a worldly spirit must at length prove fatal to piety, and when piety is gone, public spirit is on the decline, and will not long survive.

But we have in the history under review, a melancholy instance of what frequently happens to this day, and under a happier dispensation of religion—seasons and places of devotion perverted into the instruments of kindling and exercising the ungracious, the unsocial, the unkind affections. How often is the sanctu-

ary of God profaned by being made the scene of displaying the rivalship of beauty, dress, equipage, rank and affluence? The humbling services of the meek and lowly Jesus, are unnaturally forced in to the ministers of pride and vain-glory. The tranquillity of the day of sacred rest, and its gentle, peaceful employments, give a birth, which they detest and disclaim, to the whisper of envy, and the noise of slander. The feast of love is disturbed, the sacrifice of peace is defiled by the impure claws of harpies; and “the house of prayer is turned into a den of thieves.” “Surely, my beloved brethren, these things ought not so to be.”

Happily for us, the influence of the gospel, and the laws of our country, and the spirit of the times, prevent the practice which threw Elkanah’s family into such a flame; and which, wherever it has prevailed, has been productive of confusion, and every evil work. May a purer religion, and wiser institutions, and a more enlightened spirit, produce a more perfect morality, promote domestic happiness, and extend and secure national prosperity.

We now proceed farther to unfold, from the sacred history, the character and conduct of Hannah; earnestly praying, that with “all” the rest of “scripture,” which “is given by inspiration of God,” it may prove profitable for doctrine, and for reproof, and for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.”

HISTORY OF HANNAH,

THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

LECTURE XVI.

So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but will give unto thine handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drank neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.—1 SAMUEL i. 9—18.

THE support and the consolations administered by religion, are adapted to the nature and necessities of man. The exercises which it prescribes arise out of the circumstances and events of human life; and the being and perfections of God present themselves to us according as we pass from one condition to another. There are comforts which no one but God could have bestowed: there is wretchedness which God only can relieve. Hence the soul rises directly to the Giver of all good in transports of gratitude, and cleaves to him when every other refuge fails. Hence, all that is known by the name of prayer, is at once the voice of nature, the result of reason, and a dictate of religion.

What is the confession of the penitent, but the trembling hope of a guilty creature toward the God of mercy, fleeing from the judgment of unrelenting, unforgiving man; from the persecution of an awakened, an accusing conscience, to a proclamation of peace and pardon from heaven? What is the resignation of the patient, but a devout acknowledgment of unerring wisdom, which does all things well, and afflicts in loving kindness? What is the cry of distress, but an appeal to omnipotence for that assistance which the powers of nature cannot bestow? What is adoration, but the faculties of an intelligent being lost in the contemplation of infinite perfection? Even the rash and impious appeals to Heaven, which are uttered by the thoughtless and profane, demonstrate, that piety and prayer are founded in the very constitution of our nature. Why does that blasphemer take the name of the Lord God in vain? why swears he by the great and terrible name of Jehovah? why is his imprecation sanctioned by that tremendous signature? why are the emotions of anger, of pain, of surprise, of joy, enforced by the names and attributes of Deity? The wretch who thus tramples on his law, insults his authority, defies his power, is in these very acts of horror paying an involuntary homage to the God of truth and justice, and obliquely confesses

that divine perfection which he has the boldness to violate.

We turn from the dreadful practice with holy indignation, to contemplate the desponding mourner fleeing for rest and relief in the bosom of a Father and a God; and to learn lessons of piety, and derive nourishment to hope, from the experience of others.

We have seen the disorder of a family in Israel, occasioned by the foolishness of man; we are now to consider that disorder rectified, and turned into a source of domestic joy and public felicity, through the wisdom and goodness of God. The solemnity of the yearly sacrifice, and the cheerfulness of the feast, had been continually embittered and destroyed to Hannah, by reflection on her state of reproach among the daughters of Israel, and the merciless insults of her rival and adversary. The kind attentions, and affectionate remonstrances of a beloved husband, soothe for a moment, but cannot remove the anguish that preyed upon her heart. She looks with impatience through the tediousness of the entertainment, to the hour of retirement; and, as soon as decency permits, she exchanges the house of mirth for the house of prayer.

“If any one is afflicted, let him pray.” And who is not ready to give testimony to the salutary influence of this hallowed employment? The suppliant thus disburthens the mind of a load, before intolerable; the effusion of tears cools and refreshes the heart. Prayer does not always bring down the grace that is solicited, but verily it has produced its effect, when the spirit is moulded into the will of the Most High. Prayer prevails not to obtain that particular blessing, but behold it is crowned with another and a greater benefit. The expected good comes not exactly at the time and in the way it was entreated, but it is conveyed at the most proper season, and in the fittest way; and how much is the enjoyment heightened and sweetened by the delay! Thus, whether the wrestler “as a prince has power

with God," and prevails, or by a touch is made sensible of his weakness and inferiority, God is glorified, and the divine life is promoted in him.

The memoirs of this good woman's life comprehend but a very short period, a few years at most. Herein consists one of the excellencies of the sacred writings. Other biographers drag you with them into dry, uninteresting details of events which had much better been forgotten. You are wearied out with the laborious display of childish prattle, the pretended prognostic of future eminence, or the doating, imperfect, distorted recollections of a wretched old man who has outlived himself. There are in truth very few particulars in any man's life worthy of being recorded; and of those who really have lived, a very short memoir indeed will serve all the valuable purposes of history.

Every thing of importance for us to know respecting Hannah is what related to the birth of her son Samuel; and to that accordingly the scripture account of her is confined. She is the fourth, as far as we recollect, on the face of the sacred history, represented in nearly similar circumstances, and she is not the least respectable of the four. "Sarah laughed," staggering at the promise of God through unbelief. Rebekah seems to have borne her trial with listlessness and indifference; and Rachel, irritated with her's, loses all sense of shame and decency, and exclaims, "Give me children, else I die." Hannah feels her calamity as a woman, deploras it as a woman, and seeks deliverance from it as one who believed in the power and grace of God.

Observe the more delicate shades in her character. She rose not up till "after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk." She had patience and self-government sufficient to carry her without any apparent disquietude, through the formalities of a public assembly, which must have been very painful, irksome, and disgusting to her. She would rather constrain herself, than make others uneasy; and pine in secret, rather

than permit her private griefs to spread a gloom over the innocent communications of society. Tell me, if you will, that the remark is frivolous, and the doctrine unedifying. I shall neither feel mortified nor complain, provided you permit me to think that nothing is frivolous that tends to unfold the excellence and importance of the female character, and nothing unedifying which serves to improve the better part of our species in the knowledge of the means whereby both their respectability and importance may be effectually promoted. I repeat it therefore confidently, that Hannah is here represented as exemplifying a hard lesson, but one of high importance to all her sex. Who does not know, my female friends, that your condition and place in society necessarily subject you to many cruel privations, many mortifying constraints? What heart but sympathizes with you, obliged, as you are, to bear and to forbear, in patience and silence, and to practise painful duty, without so much as the poor reward of notice and approbation. But trust me, you have often, when you little think of it, the admiration and esteem of the more attentive and judicious; you have the sweet consolation of reflecting that you are endeavouring to act well; you can look up in humble hope to that God who seeth in secret; who observes and records what the world overlooks or forgets.

How pitiable, on the other hand, are those unhappy females, who dream of deriving consequence from vexing and disturbing all around them, by perpetually bringing forward their personal vexations, as if the world had nothing to mind but them, and their real or imaginary grievances.

But this, as was said, is only a shade in the character; the great, striking feature, is a fervid, importunate, aspiring spirit of devotion. Sighs and tears are the language of nature sinking under its own wo, of a "heart that knows its own bitterness;" prayer is the language of faith in, and hope toward God, the exertion

of a soul struggling to get free, casting its burthen upon the Lord, and acquiring strength from exercise. There is a beautiful and affecting copiousness in her expression. She addresses God as the Lord of universal nature, who “doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth;” as “the Lord of hosts,” who has all creatures, all events in his hand and at his disposal. The repetition of the word “handmaid” is emphatical, and powerfully expresses her humility, submission, and sense of dependence; and it is humility that lends energy to every other principle of the divine life. “From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,” and accordingly we find her diversifying her petition into all the various modes of address; “if thou wilt indeed look on my affliction, and remember me, and not forget me.” Is this the vain repetition of the hypocrite, who thinks he shall “be heard for his much speaking?” O no, it is the honest effusion of a heart filled with its object, persisting in the pursuit, and rising gradually into confidence of success. It is a happy anticipation of the Saviour’s doctrine, “that men ought to pray always, and not to faint:” a happy example of clearness and precision in the subject matter of prayer, of confidence in, and reliance on the Hearer of prayer, of holy resolution to make a suitable return to prayer heard, accepted, and answered.

But what was here, the expression of a devout, a praying spirit? The noise of the Pharisee, the pomp of words, the correctness that courts the applause of men? No, but the ardour of a gracious spirit which neglects forms, which never thinks of appearance, or the opinion of others, which, occupied with God, overlooks man. What need of words, to him who reads the secret recesses of the heart, who hears the half-breathed sigh of the prisoner in his dungeon, who collects the falling tears of the mourner, and has already granted the pious request before it is formed in the anxious breast? Strong inward emotion will of necessity imprint itself on

the external appearance. The voice may be suppressed, but the features will speak; what bushel will confine the lightning of the eye? the lips will move involuntary; the hands will raise themselves to heaven, without an admonition from vanity, and the bosom will swell to make room for the expanding heart, though no eye is present to see it, and regardless whether there be or no.

How equivocal are the signs of human passions, and how liable to mistake is the most discerning human eye? What was in the sight of God an indication of faith believing against hope, of a fervent piety which totally absorbed the senses, of a heavenly mind which rapt the very body up to the throne of God, is, in the sight of Eli, the disorder of a distempered brain, the effect of excess, the lowest, the most deplorable, the most disgusting exhibition of degraded humanity. Alas, the good man, as we shall presently find, had “a beam in his own eye;” and thereby was led to discern “a mote” in that of another, where there was none. In reflecting on the rash judgments of men, the choice of David, when in a great strait, presses itself upon us with redoubled force; “Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hand of man.” “If God justifieth, who is he that condemneth?” But ah! what signifies the applause of the world to him who is condemned of his own conscience, and who trembles every hour at thought of the righteous judgment of God!

I like the defence of Hannah almost as well as her prayer; it argues conscious innocence and integrity. Not a single particle of gall enters into her reply, not even a particle of honest heat and indignation, at an imputation so odious. A female charged with a breach of decency so gross as excess of wine, and not break out into a flame! Ah, her calmness and temper refute sufficiently the infamous aspersion, infinitely better than a torrent of intemperate abuse would have done. How calm, how beautiful, how lovely, how dignified is inno-

cence! It seeks the light, it shrinks not from the eye of inspection, it defies calumny, and wraps itself up in its own pure mantle; but disdains not, at the same time, to satisfy the honest inquiry, and to remove the hasty suspicion of true goodness; it is always ready to render a reason, always ready to prevent its good from being evil spoken of.

The conduct of Eli is estimable in two points of view. Observing, as he thought, the temple of the Lord profaned, and the female character dishonoured, he honestly speaks out his suspicion and censure to the party concerned; instead of whispering them in the ear of a third person; and thereby affords an opportunity of explanation, and of coming to right understanding; and, once satisfied of his having been mistaken, he retracts his hasty judgment, and exchanges reprehension into blessing, and supplicates Heaven in favour of her whom he had rashly condemned.

To what a happy serenity is the mind of Hannah now restored! She has poured out her soul before the Lord, and vindicated her innocence to man. The tranquillity and joy of her spirit shine in the whole of her outward deportment; her countenance brightens up, she partakes in the festivity of the season, and "is no more sad." What a different figure does the same man present to the eyes of the world, inflamed with rage, torn with envy, stung with remorse, distracted with anxiety, degraded with debauchery; or with a visage beaming benevolence, eyes animated with love, a form firm and erect from conscious integrity.

Would you wish to appear to advantage before others, take care to cleanse the inside of the cup. Purify thyself "from all filthiness of the spirit." Let order and peace reign within; no artificial daubing applied on the outside, no splendour or elegance of apparel, no studied arrangement of the features, will do it half so well.

Looks and appearance are perhaps of inferior consequence to one sex, but they are of much to the other.

With some, appearance is all in all. In that view, it is not easy to imagine the effect which the inward temper and character produce. Beauty becomes perfect ugliness, and inspires nothing but disgust, from the moment that the face begins to wear the traces of pride, contempt, envy, fury or insolence. On the other hand, be assured, that a very homely external may be improved into perfect loveliness, by affability, gentleness, benevolence, compassion, and, above all, by a spirit of genuine piety, the parent of every grace. If there be a human being that really deserves the name of angel, a term, for the most part, most vilely prostituted, it is a sensible woman descending from the temple, or issuing from her closet, to enter with composedness, sweetness and satisfaction on the employments of her humble, but important station in human life.

It was through the disorder of a divided family, it was through the wo of an afflicted woman, it was amidst the corruptions of a degenerate church and a disjointed state, that God was pleased to raise up a prophet, a priest, a judge in Israel to stem the torrent, to restore the lost dignity of religion, to save a sinking nation. When events flow in an even channel, when the powers of nature produce their effect in an uniform tenour, a blind chance, an irresistible fate, or an unintelligent arrangement receives the homage, which is due only to sovereign wisdom, and all-comprehensive beneficence. For this reason, God sometimes permits the great machine as it were to stand still, that men may observe by what hand it is stopt, and by what hand it is put in motion again.

Isaac, Jacob, Samson, Samuel, four of the most eminent among the types of the great Restorer of fallen man, were introduced into the world, through the agonies of desponding nature, through the exercise of undaunted faith, and the unwearied importunity of prayer and supplication. They were the successive lights of the world, each in his day; and having every one ful-

filled his day, were successively extinguished. The great Light of the world has arisen, the stars disappear, the shadows are fled away. Patriarchs and prophets bring their glory, and lay it at his feet, a voice from heaven proclaims, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear Him."

—Let not the apparently declining state of any interest preach despair; for every evil has its remedy, except despair. That cause must perish, which all agree to give up as lost; a dying cause may revive and flourish by the wisdom and honest exertions of one man. Impaired health often issues in death, embarrassed circumstances in bankruptcy, an irregular life in irretrievable perdition; because the patient, the debtor, the sinner gave himself up too hastily, and was lost through fear of being lost. While there is "balm in Gilead, and a physician there," no wound, however grievous, is incurable. While there is friendship, while there is compassion on earth, honest distress will find sympathy and relief. While the throne of grace is accessible, there is hope "for the chief of sinners."

And if no cause of man be desperate, who shall dare to despair of the cause of God and truth? Behold, in a posterior period of this sacred history, Esther iii. 8—15, the utter extirpation of the posterity of Abraham determined, and the plans of Providence threatened, of course, with defeat and disappointment. Behold the bloody warrant signed, and "sealed with the ring" of Ahasuerus, and thereby rendered irreversible. Behold the vengeful Haman, like the exterminating angel, with his sword drawn in his hand, ready to fall upon his prey. What can save a devoted people from destruction? *One* obscure Jew; one not admitted to the king's councils, but who sat unregarded in the king's gate. He feels as a citizen and a man, he laments the impending doom of his country as a citizen and a man; but he likewise acts, and exerts himself like a citizen and a man, and leaves the issue to Him, in whose hand are the hearts

of kings—and it prospered. The remonstrance of Mordecai with the queen, at this awful crisis, is a masterpiece of intrepidity, piety and good sense, and furnishes an useful example for the conduct of both public and private life. “Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king’s house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this,” Esther iv. 13, 14. The Roman consul, whose rashness lost the battle of Cannæ, and endangered the existence of the state, received the thanks of the senate, “because he had not despaired of the commonwealth.” The gallant prince of Orange, afterwards William III. of England, when urged to submit to the victorious arms of France, which were ravaging the United Provinces, and when the ruin of the republic seemed inevitable, nobly replied, “there is one way to secure me from the sight of my country’s destruction; I will die in the last ditch.” His resolution prevailed, and his country was saved from the yoke of the invader. And if confidence in a skilful, brave and fortunate commander, can carry a handful to victory through myriads of foes, what has the christian to fear, let difficulties and dangers be ever so many, ever so great, while conscious he is engaged in a good cause, and that he is following “the Captain of Salvation.”

We proceed to view the character and behaviour of Hannah in the hour of success and prosperity, blessed with the answer of prayer, and exulting in the enjoyment of the purest delights, and in performing the most important duties of life and religion.—May our meditation on these things be sweet and profitable! Amen.

HISTORY OF HANNAH,

THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

LECTURE XVII.

And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah; and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about, after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord. And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the Lord the yearly sacrifice, and his vow. But Hannah went not up: for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever. And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the Lord establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.—1 SAMUEL i, 19—23.

THE birth of a child is an event of much importance to those who are immediately concerned in it, and of much importance to the world. It is natural for a man to wish that his family should be built up, and his name transmitted. Every child is an accession to nation.

al strength, is one more added to the number of rational, immortal beings, is a new display of a great Creator's power, wisdom and goodness. There lie dormant the precious seeds of faculties which are one day to astonish, instruct and bless mankind. These infants, a few years hence, are to be the pillars of the state, the bulwarks of their country, the glory of the church of Christ. That young one shall by and by burst through the obscurity of his birth, and the meanness of his condition; shall become eminently useful, and purchase a name which ages to come shall pronounce with respect and esteem. But what is it to be known and distinguished among men? The period approaches, when God himself shall in the face of the universe acknowledge the least of these as his sons, and seat them on heavenly thrones.

It is natural for a man to wish his family built up, and for a good woman to wish the name and virtues of the husband of her youth preserved and propagated, even though she has not the fond desire, the flattering hope, of being a mother in Israel. But the determinations of Providence do not always accord with the innocent propensities of the human heart, much less with the insatiated demands of pride, avarice and ambition. Even the wise, the amiable and the virtuous are visited with this sore evil, the want of children. It is sometimes the calamity of those who have no other calamity. It demonstrates the imperfection of human bliss; it spreads a field for the exercise of resignation to the will of God; it furnishes both a motive and a subject for prayer: for we can carry with confidence, to the throne of grace, many a petition which we should be afraid or ashamed of preferring to a man like ourselves. Happy is the man, happy the woman, who can deposit this and every other care in the bosom of a Father in heaven. She may sit down with Hannah, and "eat" and drink, "and be no more sad."

We are this evening presented with the history of the birth and infancy of one of those illustrious children whose fame is universally known, and shall be had in everlasting remembrance, namely, of Samuel, the prophet of the Lord, the judge of Israel, the setter up and the terror of kings; the glory of his own age and country; and the morning star of a brighter day. The gift of this precious child was long withheld, that it might be more devoutly acknowledged, and more highly prized. Men overlook the ordinary appearances of nature, however stupendous and striking. In order therefore to rouse them to attention, and constrain them to observe the finger of God, the fiery comet is made to glare through the sky, and the earth shakes to the centre.

The blessing was sweetened to Hannah by every circumstance that can affect the fond maternal heart. A child to one that had long been afflicted with barrenness, and cruelly insulted on that account; a man child, the answer of prayer; the power of performing for her darling infant, the sweetest and one of the most important maternal duties; and the cordial concurrence of the father in all her prudent, affectionate and pious purposes; present enjoyment and blossoming prospects! If there be pure and perfect bliss on earth, it is the portion of such a woman, in such a situation.

“The Lord remembered her.” Was he ever unkindful or unkind? No, he delayed, and he granted in love. How much it concerns thee, O man, O woman, to know and believe this! What can reconcile thee to the hardships of thy lot, but the persuasion that the good thou desirest, is denied in wisdom, and the load that oppresses thee laid on by the hand of a Father? Trust in the Lord, and be of good cheer: the time to favour thee will come; “the Lord will provide,” “the Lord will remember thee.”

“She bare a son, and called his name Samuel.”

Gracious is the correspondence between a devout spirit, and approving, assenting Heaven. Behold the prayer of faith ascending as on eagle's wings, and resting on the foot-stool of yonder radiant throne; behold the good and perfect gift coming down in return from the Father of light. Thus the vapours exhaled from the briny deep, fall back in copious showers to refresh and fertilize the earth. What a holy contention is here presented to us! The pious soul striving with God in supplication, in praise, in obedience, in faithfulness; the God of mercy striving with the meek and humble one in showing kindness, in heaping favour upon favour. *Samuel*, "asked, and given of God," shall bear to the last hour of his life, the memorial of his mother's fervent importunity at the throne of grace, and of God's hearing her in the time of need. It shall serve for ever to remind himself that he was a gift obtained of God by prayer, and devoted to God in gratitude. Every tongue that pronounces, every ear that hears the sound, shall be admonished of the union which devotion forms and maintains between earth and heaven. The mother names, the father assents, God approves, and time confirms the nomination.

We find Elkanah and all of his family who were fit for the journey, again on the road to Shiloh, to celebrate the great yearly festival, after the birth of his son. The bounties of Providence bind more powerfully the duties of the law upon the heart as well as upon the conscience, and thereby render religion not only a reasonable, but a pleasant service. The pleasure of waiting upon God, in the ordinances of his appointment, was greatly heightened to this good man, by the company of those whom nature had endeared to him. The length and inconvenience of the road were relieved, and sweetened, and shortened by friendly conversation and mutual offices of attention and kindness. The bitterness of strife is heard no more.

The sacrifice is offered up with greater ardour, when one flame of affection meets another in presenting it; and the feast of peace acquires a higher relish from its being eaten in the spirit, and in the bonds of love. Social worship, as has been observed, has a most blessed effect in producing, supporting, and improving social affections. The tie of duty is strengthened between husband and wife; the bond of nature between parent and child, between brother and brother, is fortified and ennobled by going together to the house of God, and returning in company from thence. The eye of a stranger is caught and pleased with the sight of a decent family on their road to the temple. Your prayers arise with increased ardour from seeing your children around you in the house of prayer; your hearts glow with a holier gratitude when you hear their voices join in the praises which you sing. Offence has been given, behold it lost and forgotten for ever, because the parties have bowed their knees together before God, and pronounced together the petition of reconciliation and peace. “Heavenly Father, forgive our trespasses, as we forgive them who trespass against us.” Common mercies have been received; see how they increase and multiply, see with what additional satisfaction they are felt and enjoyed, while the notes of thanksgiving ascend from hearts and lips in unison. Common distress presses; lo, the burthen is already made light, the mourners have been together before the Father of mercies, the refuge of the miserable: they have poured out their hearts before God, and are lightened; they have cast all their care upon him, and are at rest.

Christians, you have no painful and expensive journey to undertake, in order to present yourself before the Lord. Your Shiloh is at home. Of you no costly sacrifice is demanded; “Offer unto the Lord thanksgiving, and pay your vows unto the Most High; and call upon him in the day of trouble.” Christian parent,

Providence has made thee priest to that little church and congregation; bear them, as Aaron did the twelve tribes of Israel, engraven like jewels upon thy heart, to the most holy place; to the altar of incense.

“But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, Not until the child be weaned.” Every duty of life and of religion has its proper place and season. God hath said, and the great Teacher sent from God, hath by both precept and practice established the word, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice.” The religion which makes light of relative duty, which teaches carelessness or neglect in our lawful worldly concerns, and withdraws men from their place and station in society, is mistaken and erroneous; it is not the religion of the Bible; it has neither authority nor example to support it. That man is doing God service, who labours in his vocation, that he may have wherewith to do justly, and to show mercy; not he who is slothful in business, but eager in argument, and who gives himself to speculating, when he ought to be working with his hands. That woman is performing a religious service, who is looking well to her household; giving suck to one child and instruction to another, practising industry and economy; not she who is for ever rambling after favourite dogmas or favourite teachers; aiming at shining in the church, when she ought to be shining in her most honourable sphere, her own house: and engaging warmly in matters of doubtful disputation, while the food and clothing of her family are neglected. Who can call in question the piety of Hannah? And surely her absenting herself from the feast at Shiloh, on so just an occasion, will not be deemed an impeachment of it.

But though the history has led me to make these remarks, perhaps, in our day, they might have been spared. Have I not been combating a mistake into which neither the men nor the women of the present age are greatly disposed to fall? Ought I not rather to

caution my hearers against the prevalence of a worldly spirit, to the extinction not only of the soul, but to the neglect of the very form of religion? What, warn this generation against “the danger of being religious over-much?” What, warn them of the importance of attending to, and pursuing their temporal interest? What, caution them against frequenting the temple on working days, when they will not be diverted from the pursuit of business or pleasure on the Lord’s day? I was in the wrong; and I change the object of my exhortation. To you, O men, I call, who, absorbed in frivolous, transitory occupations, forget that “one thing is needful;” to you, who, wallowing in the bounties of an indulgent Providence, regard not the hand from which all your comforts flow; to you, who, rising into a little wealth, a little hope, a little consequence, have lost the recollection of your having once been needy, and obscure, and unimportant; and, what is infinitely worse, have lost the recollection and the practice of that humility, and decency, and piety, which poverty and obscurity, and dependence taught and enforced.

To you, O woman, I call, who, without a shadow of reason; who, in the face of decency and propriety; who, in defiance of both feeling and conscience; who, entrusted with the education of children, female children, feel not the importance of the charge, or are not aware of the influence of example; can dispense with the very externals of godliness, can become the patterns of sabbath neglect or violation; can trifle with any thing that affects the morals or religion of the rising generation. To you I call, and say, you are treasuring up for yourselves remorse; and for these young ones, whom you dearly love, shame, and sorrow, and distress. What is the lot of a female, without the consolations of religion; and how is a young woman to learn religion if not from her own mother? Let me remind you of what you once thought, felt and resolved.

you carried that child with uneasiness and anxiety in your womb; you formed a thousand fond wishes, you put up a thousand prayers, you came under a thousand engagements. You employed not perhaps the very words of Hannah, but undoubtedly you entered entirely into her views, and the fruit of the womb was to be "holiness to the Lord." Well, God has been gracious to thee, and remembered thee. Thou hast survived the danger, and been delivered from the pangs of child-birth. You have enjoyed the satisfaction of training the beloved of your soul through the dangers, difficulties and solicitude of infancy and childhood. God has graciously done his part, and you have so far performed yours. But did your engagements cease, when the infant was weaned? Did you rear that tender plant with so much anxiety, tenderness and care, only to poison and corrupt it, after it had begun to take root, and bud, and blossom? Know you not, that the inconsideration and folly of a day may destroy the pains and labour of many years; and that the eyes of children are much quicker and more retentive than their ears?

Happy that daughter who is betimes formed to habits of discretion, of purity, of regularity, of piety, by the tender guardian and guide of her early days! Happy that mother whose attention is bent on infusing betimes, in her female offspring at least, the principles of wisdom, virtue, and true godliness; who is honoured to exemplify what she teaches, and is blessed with a docile, affectionate, and improving disciple!

The manner in which Elkanah and Hannah live and converse together, is exemplary and instructive. They have one common interest; they have one darling object of affection; they express one and the same will, in terms of mutual kindness and endearment. "She said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him,

that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever. And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good, tarry until thou have weaned him, only the Lord establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she had weaned him."

There was in all this a commanding principle of religion, of zeal for the will and glory of God, which regulated the spirit, and inspired the tongue; without which I am afraid there is but a slender security for domestic felicity in the exercise of even good nature and good manners, much less in a mere sense of decency, or regard to the opinion of the world. These may overawe at particular seasons and in particular situations; but the fear and love of God are permanent and unvarying principles; they enforce and assist relative duty till it grows into a habit, and habit renders even difficult things easy and agreeable.

Samuel, who is his own biographer, has most judiciously drawn a veil over his infancy. Childish prognostics of future eminence are generally ridiculous and contemptible; they can impose only on the partiality of parental affection, or the credulity of superstition. The cynic snarls disdain at the relation of these premature prodigies of dawning wisdom, and the sage smiles indulgence and compassion on the fond belief. Let parents, by all means, amuse, delight themselves and each other with the sallies of infant, opening genius, but let them keep the delight to themselves. It is one of the joys in which "a stranger intermeddleth not."

In the next Lecture we shall be led forward to consider the presentment of Samuel before the Lord in Shiloh; the sacrifice which accompanied that solemn ceremony; the farther discovery of the amiable and excellent spirit by which the mother was actuated; and the infant prophet's entrance on his important office.

—Behold once more, christians, the spirit of prophecy still pointing to one and the same great object. The persons and circumstances of the prophets were various; but amidst that variety, some one striking feature of character, office, or condition announced “Him that was to come,” more clearly or more obscurely reflected his image, and “prepared the way of the Lord.” The tongues of the prophets are many; but they all speak the same language, they all pronounce one name. The periods of their existence and predictions were widely remote; but all meet in one central point of light, in one auspicious instant, “the fulness of time,” in one illustrious personage, “to whom all give witness,” in one commanding “purpose and grace”—the salvation of the world. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers, by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,” Heb. i. 1—3. Behold all created glory thus absorbed in one glorious, divine person, “who is above all, and through all, and in all.” “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,” Phil. ii. 9—11.

HISTORY OF HANNAH,

THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

LECTURE XVIII.

And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh. And the child was young. And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli. And she said, O my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him. Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord as long as he liveth; he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there.—1 SAMUEL i. 24—28.

“LORD, what is a man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?” Every serious reflection on the nature, and perfections, and works of God, suggests this rapturous meditation of the holy psalmist. Every view of Deity is at once humiliating and encouraging to the soul. We seem to shrink into nothing, while we contemplate the regions of unbounded space; while the eye wanders from orb to orb; and the mind loses itself in calculating their number, distances, magnitude, lustre and harmony; while imagination wings its daring flight to the world of spirits, and surveys myriads of angles adoring before

the throne of the Most High; and “the spirits of just men made perfect” rejoicing “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” But man rises into greatness and importance, when we reflect that “God created him in his own image;” that eternal Providence exercises an unremitting solicitude about him; and that for his redemption the Son of God suffered and died.

The little concerns of individuals, and of private families, acquire value and dignity when we consider them as stamped with the seal of omnipotence, as the operation of infinite wisdom, as links in the great chain of divine administration, and as extending their influence to eternity. But destroy this connexion, and we perceive only a strange and unaccountable scene of vanity, folly, and confusion.

The holy scriptures, which exhibit the justest representation, and enable us to form the justest estimate of human life, keep this continual interposition and commanding influence of divine Providence constantly in view. We meet with domestic feelings and occurrences exactly similar to our own, and we find a proof that the Bible is the word of God, in our own personal, daily experience.

The transactions which led to the scene represented in the passage now read, have been too recently submitted to your notice, to need repetition. In the spirit and deportment of Elkanah and Hannah to each other, we have an useful example of conjugal complacency and affection. In the character of Hannah, we behold the feelings of the woman sweetly blended with the piety of the saint: and the child of sorrow seeking and finding refuge in the power and mercy of God. We are now to contemplate one of the most pleasing objects that human life presents—a good and honest heart in possession of its wish, and making the proper use of the expected blessing; the spirit of prayer changed into the spirit of praise, and vows formed in the hour of distress faithfully performed.

Let our first meditations turn on the wisdom and goodness of that great Being, who has established human felicity on such a solid foundation; or rather has drawn it from so many combined sources. How manifold and how tender, in particular, are the ties which unite a mother and her son? She carried him in her womb with solicitude and uneasiness, and brought him into the world at the hazard of her life. She sustained his infant days with the blood of her own veins, and slumber was a stranger to her eyes, that he might sleep in tranquillity. The first object which he distinguished, was the smiling face of his guardian angel, the first sound that struck his opening ear, was the murmur of maternal affection; the first idea he formed, was that of seeking refuge from want, and pain, and danger, in the fond bosom of a parent. The very anguish and trouble which she endured on his account, but endear him the more to her; a sense of early assured protection, “grows with his growth, and strengthens with his strength,” and forms a bond of mutual attachment, which on one side is hardly to be dissolved, and on the other, is one of the most powerful securities against the inroads of vice, and is the last convulsive grasp of expiring virtue.

Nature has laid upon you, mothers, the heaviest and most important part of education. The good or the evil is already done before the child is taken out of your hands. Happily the weakness of your constitution is strengthened and upheld for the arduous task, by the force of affection, and your very labour thereby is rendered your delight. And, O how glorious is your reward! you desire, you can desire none higher, than to see your son, the son of your womb, the son of your vows, remembering and practising the early lessons which his mother taught him.

How happy was Eli in having for a pupil, a child suckled, and weaned, and instructed in early life, by a Hannah! How great the goodness of the compassion-

ate and merciful Father of all, who by means so simple, so pleasant, so powerful, so effectual, makes constant provision for the comfort, the protection and the improvement of man!

Let us proceed to meditate, for a moment, on the amiable and instructive pattern here set before us, of a faithful and obedient heart. Distress naturally dictates wishes, and prayers, and vows; it makes us sensible of subjection and dependence; but when the blessing is obtained, the load removed, and the hour of performance come, men are as forgetful and as niggardly as once they were attentive and liberal. Ten lepers were cleansed, but “where are the nine?” Has one only returned to give thanks? Ingratitude is one of those crimes which no man is either bold or depraved enough to defend, but with which all men are justly chargeable. How few earthly benefactors but have reason to complain of an ungracious return? How few parents but have the bitterness of bitterness, filial ingratitude, mingled in their cup? How verily guilty is a whole “world lying in wickedness,” before God, in this respect? There is really no merit in gratitude, but what arises from its rarity; and that rarity stamps it one of the highest of moral virtues. Would it be doing injustice to the other sex, to say, that gratitude is a quality more frequently to be found in the female character? I have no hesitation in affirming, that it is one of the most powerful attractions in any character, and that all other attractions whatever are good for nothing without it.

We observed formerly in the conduct of Hannah a happy mixture of piety and prudence. While the state of her child confined her to mount Ephraim it would have been the reverse of a religious service, to repair to the feast at Shiloh; when he could with safety be removed to the place of God’s presence, to keep him back had been unfaithfulness and impiety. Providence without piety will quickly degenerate into selfishness and the love of this world; will harden the heart, and lull

the conscience asleep. Piety without prudence, will inspire pride and intolerance; will lead to idleness and irregularity in conduct; and, out of an affected zeal for the first table of the law, will erase the characters of the second, or through negligence and disuse, suffer them to be disfigured by filth, or corrupted and impaired by rust, so as to become at length wholly illegible. Where piety and prudence are found united, the love of God and man will perfectly consist; both tables of the law will be equally clear and distinct, and their combined influence will instruct the person by whom it is felt and understood, to “use the world so as not to abuse it.”

At length the time of presenting herself before the Lord, and of performing her vow arrives. The precious child must be no longer her's, but God's. And did he indeed cease to be the parents, by being dedicated to the Most High? Surely no, he became theirs by a firmer and more sacred tie, they have an interest in him unknown, unfelt before. Their treasure has acquired infinite value from the place in which it is deposited; and attendance at God's altar has conferred nobility on the little Levite, which all the possessions on mount Ephraim could not countervail.

Hannah presented herself before the Lord at a former solemnity with bitter crying and tears; she “went forth then weeping, bearing precious seed, she cometh again rejoicing, bringing her sheaves with her; for they that sow in tears shall reap in joy.” She presents herself before the Lord, but neither with a contracted heart nor an empty hand. The law demanded for God the first-born of every creature. The whole tribe of which Samuel was a son, was accepted in place of the first-born of Israel, and the first-born of her family might be redeemed by the substitution of a victim. Thus clearly was the spirit of the gospel inculcated by the institutions of the law; and the doctrine of the atonement through the blood of the “Lamb slain from the foun-

dation of the world," was taught unto them as it is taught unto us. Throughout we see the innocent suffering for the guilty; from the sacrifice of Abel down to the sacrifice on mount Calvary, of "the just suffering for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God."

With what mixed emotions must an Israelitish parent, of any sensibility, have presented this sacrifice? Behold the darling child, the first-born led to the altar, but not to bleed and die: no, that innocent lamb, that bullock in the prime of life, is to bleed and die in his stead; and, mournful to reflect, though religion does not now demand such sacrifices, necessity and the appetites of men constantly require them, and we behold the whole brute "creation groaning and travelling in pain together," to perform the drudgery, minister to the pleasure, or with their flesh to satisfy the need of a creature much more criminal than themselves; and, as if that were too little, subjected to the cruelty and caprice of rational beings, become greater brutes than themselves.

With the confidence of true goodness Hannah now addresses Eli, and reminds him of what he had probably forgotten, but was of too much moment to herself ever to be permitted to fall into oblivion. Eli had only seen her lips move, but heard not the words she pronounced; and the violent emotion in which she was, had conveyed very foul suspicions to his mind. These, with the dignity and calmness of conscious innocence, she repelled; and assured him in general terms that what he had unkindly mistaken for the effect of wine, was the agitation of an afflicted spirit, pouring out its anguish before God; but the subject of her prayer she still kept within her own breast. There was then no witness of her vow but God and her own conscience; and that was enough; it was recorded in heaven; and an honest mind will find itself equally bound by a resolution formed in secret, as by an oath administered in the face of an assembled world. With what holy exultation does she now

declare her engagement, exhibit the sacred pledge of it, and proceed to the public and solemn discharge of it! “She brought the child to Eli, and said, O my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him,” Verse 25—27. How sweetly affecting are the effusions of nature, when aided and animated by devotion! How religion ennobles and dignifies every character, how it places every other quality in its fairest and most favourable point of view! How well it is adapted to every season and situation of life! It was this which fortified Hannah against the bitter insults and reproaches of her merciless adversary, and preserved her from rendering railing for railing. It was this which taught her self-government, so that she disturbed not the solemnity of the feast with womanish complaints, but covered a sorrowful heart with a serene countenance! It was this which carried her to the house of the Lord, for light, comfort and relief. It was this which carried her with reputation and advantage through the first duties of a mother; and exhibited, in one, the affectionate wife, the tender parent, the devout worshipper. This filled her heart and inspired her tongue, in presenting her offspring, in addressing the high-priest, in raising her song of praise. And this will communicate lustre, value and importance on every female character, whether known to the world, or overlooked by it; in the secrecy of the family, or in the celebrity of the temple. There is a God who “seeth in secret, and will reward openly.”

Eli repeats a cordial *Amen* to her pious purpose, accepts the precious trust committed unto him, and bends his knees in joyful acknowledgment of that God who had been multiplying his mercy to this family, and building up the house of Israel. And it is not long before he finds that this young Nazarene was provided of God, and instructed of his mother, to rectify the

disorders of his own house, and to supply the place of a degenerate race of priests, ripe for destruction and doomed to it, and ready to bring down a "father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

Hannah's song of praise, which follows at length in the opening of the next chapter, merits, on many accounts, a separate and particular consideration. It possesses all the majesty, grace and beauty of ancient oriental poetry. It is one of the happiest effusions of an excellent female labouring under a grateful sense of the highest obligations. It presents and impresses some of the justest and most interesting views of divine Providence, and, what is above all, it discloses one of the clearest and most distinct prospects of the coming, person and character of *Messiah*, the Prophet of prophets, King of kings, Lord of lords. Yes, christians, for this prophetess was reserved the honour of first pronouncing in sacred song, that "name which is as ointment poured forth," which angels mention with wonder and reverence, and which the whole company of the redeemed shall one day proclaim with "joy unspeakable and full of glory;" MESSIAH the anointed of the Lord—whom the world so long expected, who in the fulness of time appeared, whom unbelieving Jews refused to acknowledge; whom they despised, rejected, crucified, and put to death; whom "God has exalted a Prince and Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins;" to whose second coming the course of nature, the evolutions of providence, the hopes and fears of every heart of man, the earnest expectation of the creature, and the hand writing of God in scripture, all, all directly point.

The next Lecture will be an attempt to illustrate, and practically to improve Hannah's song of praise. May we bring to it a portion of that spirit which inspired the lips of her who sung, and directed the pen of him who wrote. Let me conclude the present,

with calling on every one present, to recollect personal obligations, and to walk suitably to them. Call to remembrance vows formed on a bed of languishing, in the hour of difficulty, in the instant of danger, at the table of the Lord; and thankfully pay them: as knowing that “it is better not to vow, than to vow and not to pay.”

Desire more earnestly the best gifts; spiritual, heavenly, eternal blessings. By all means, in your vows, stipulate for your portion of present and temporal good things, saying, with Jacob, “If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God,” Gen. xxviii. 20, 21—and with Hannah, pouring out the bitterness of an oppressed heart before God, and begging relief of the Father of mercies, saying, “O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid.” But forget not withal, to stipulate, with Solomon, for “an understanding heart,” to prize and to improve mercies already bestowed; and with Jabez, calling on the God of Israel, saying, “O that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me.”

Hannah promised to devote to the Lord the child which should be given her; and ye have solemnly engaged to yield yourselves unto God; and “ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.” “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God,” Rom. xii. 1, 2.

HISTORY OF HANNAH,

THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

LECTURE XIX.

And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waked feeble. The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.—1 SAMUEL ii. 1—10.

IN man, the master-piece of creation, is discernable various kinds of life, distinct from each other, yet most wonderfully blended and united, so as to form one great and astonishing whole. The animal, the intellectual, the moral life: to which we add, in man, as he came from the hands of his Creator, and in man, “renewed” by grace “in the spirit of his mind,” the spiritual and divine life, the dawning light, the earnest and pledge, the celestial foretaste of everlasting life.

The first of these we enjoy in common with the beasts that perish. Like theirs, our bodies grow and decline. Like them we are led by sense and appetite, and are susceptible of pleasure and pain. And, like them, we arose out of the earth, are supported by it, and feel ourselves returning to it again.

The second, or intellectual life, raises man far above every other animal. He possesses the power of thought, that productive faculty of the Almighty; that image of God in our nature. He contemplates, compares, reflects, reasons, plans, performs. By means of this he exercises dominion over all other creatures. Inferior to many, in some respects, by this he renders himself superior to all; and reduces all their powers to the subjection and obedience of himself.

The moral life places man in society; connects him with intelligent beings like himself; opens a capacious field of duty and of enjoyment; stamps him an object of approbation or blame, of reward or punishment.

The divine life unites man to the Author and supporter of his existence, the source of all his comforts, the foundation of all his hopes; the witness and the judge of all his actions; the avenger of all unrighteousness, “the rewarder of them who diligently seek him.”

To Adam, as an animal, God said, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth: behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.”

In Adam the intellectual life discovered itself, when the Lord God brought unto him “every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.”

—God having implanted a principle of moral life in man, said, “it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him;” he took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it; and commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it. For in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”

In Adam the spritual and divine life was perfected, when “God created man in his own image.” It was extinguished and lost when by transgression he fell; it was revived by the promise of the Messiah and salvation through his blood; and it will be completely recovered when the image of God is restored through the spirit of sanctification.

All these different kinds of life have their several and corresponding expressions; and according as any one prevails, such is the character of the man. When the habitual cry is, “What shall I eat, what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?” it is easy to determine what life is predominant: it is easy to discern when the brute runs away with the man. Solomon may be given as an instance of the prevalence of intellectual life. He looked through nature, and “spake of trees, from the cedar-tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he spake also of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes. “His wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt.” The psalmist has presented us with an exquisite representation of the moral life of man (would to God it were more frequently realized)

in the fifteenth psalm; “He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour; in whose eyes a vile person is contemned: but he honoureth them that fear the Lord: he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved,” Verse 2—5. Where shall we look for an example of the highest life of man, the life of God in the soul? Nature stands silent, the whole world lies dead; it presents every kind of life but this. Where is the model to which to refer? Where is the idea of this most exalted excellence of our nature? It is to be found. “I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” “I seek not mine own glory, but the glory of him who sent me.” Read and ponder the seventeenth chapter of John’s gospel, and discover the author, the example, the giver of this divine life; and aspire after a participation of it.

We have some of these holy aspirations in the passage now read. We behold a spirit alive unto God; sinking the creature in the Creator; discerning God in every object, and in every event that arises; referring all things to Him “who doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.” Let us blend our spirits, with that of pious Hannah, and may God grant us to know and feel the happiness of having fellowship with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ.

“Hannah prayed.” In affliction she prayed: and in prosperity she prayed. Tears and smiles are not more the expression of their corresponding emotions, than supplication and thanksgiving are of that life which dictates them, in a suitableness to the various aspects of divine Providence. Sorrow is no longer sorrow when it is poured out into the bosom of sympathy and

tenderness. Every joy is multiplied an hundred fold by every communication of it to the ear and the heart of friendship. Hannah prays, “and her countenance is no more sad.” She restores her earnestly expected son to God; and is infinitely enriched by the restitution. Whether the child cry for relief, or express its gratitude by caresses and looks of satisfaction, it is equally grateful and soothing to the fond parental heart. And will the great God in every deed vouchsafe to make himself known to us by the name of the hearer of prayer? Is he exalted to show mercy? Can he be pleased with the effusions of a thankful heart? Thoughtless, inconsiderate creatures that we are; blind to our highest interest, dead to our purest joy: We see nothing of God in that distress, in that deliverance. We attend to the creature only, and therefore found no comfort. We endured without hope, and we enjoyed without relish. Happy soul, that can command itself to peace, and say, I have poured out my anguish before the Lord, I have cast all my care upon him, my burden is no longer mine, but his. “Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. He hath delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.”

In the first transports of her joy, Hannah forgets every thing but the glorious object of it. The insults of Peninnah, her delight in Samuel, stand for awhile suspended; they are lost and forgotten in the contemplation of him, who had delivered her from the one, and bestowed the other upon her. But God, as he is in himself, cannot long be an object of contemplation to mortals. It is only by what he doth, that he can be known, and loved, and enjoyed by us. The soul springs up to God, is instantly repelled and overwhelmed by “light inaccessible and full of glory,” and seeks relief and employment in surveying the ways and works of God.

“My heart rejoiceth in the Lord.” But “who is this King of glory?” The spirit shrinks with rever-

ence from the inquiry; and the heart sweetly slides into the observation and acknowledgement of what an incomprehensible Jehovah hath done. "Mine horn is exalted in the Lord." "The horn," in scripture language, is the emblem of strength and empire. She was till now undistinguished, unprised, unimportant in Israel; a wife, without the honour of being a mother. But now she has risen into lustre, and place, and pre-eminence. Her Samuel is to her "a crown of glory, and a diadem for beauty!" She had power with God and prevailed; she asked, and God granted her request. This is naturally blended in her mind, with the derision and cruel mocking which she had endured. For the very devotions of fallen creatures must savour of the calamities to which they are exposed, and the imperfection in which they are involved. Both nature and piety accordingly concur in dictating the expression of thankfulness which follows; "My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies:" Here the woman speaks; but the saint instantly sub-joins, "because I rejoice in thy salvation."

When the life of God is completely formed in the soul, every particle of human corruption shall be purged away. There shall be no feeling, nor recollection, of unkindness or enmity. And in proportion as evil affections are rooted out, and kind affections are implanted, cherished, and promoted, so is the image of God impressed, renewed and preserved. The love of God perfected shall obliterate and efface every trace of resentment against man.

After a short vibration on this string, the heart of the worshipper seems to recur with increased complacency and delight to a worthier subject of meditation, and loses itself in infinite perfection. "There is none holy as the Lord; for there is none beside thee; neither is there any rock like our God." When we attempt to meditate upon God, thought fails. When we attempt to address ourselves to him, language fails. In vain do we look round for a similitude that may

enable us to form a clearer perception of his nature. It is his glory to be single and alone; to defy and prevent every idea of resemblance or comparison. When the whole world of nature is explored, when all the powers of nature are exhausted, the soul falls back upon itself, shrinks into nothing from the daring attempt, and exclaims, "There is none beside thee," "there is none holy as the Lord. "Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection!"

—Hannah awakes from this holy rapture, to contemplate this incomprehensible Jehovah, as exercising an intelligent, uncontrollable, irresistible authority over all the ways of men; as the wise and righteous Governor of the world, whom none can successfully oppose, from whose notice none can possibly conceal himself. "Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength," Verse 3, 4. Behold the cure of pride. There is a God on high, from whom descended every advantage which one possesses above another, who carefully notes the use that is made of his benefits, and will demand an account of them; who "seeth the proud afar off, but has respect unto the lowly." "By him actions are weighed," they are judged, not according to their apparent circumstances, nor the maxims of the world, nor the rank of the parties concerned, but according to truth, according to the real merit or demerit of the action, according to the thoughts and intent of the heart. Thus is the mouth of arrogancy effectually shut, and the whole world laid low in the dust before a holy and righteous God. "The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girt with strength." Even in this world, "the Lord maketh himself known by the judgments which he executes;" and causeth men to change conditions, and turneth the

world upside down. The affairs of men, like the frame of nature, are in a state of perpetual revolution, and the history of mankind is simply an account of the rise and depression of wretched mortals by means not of their own contrivance, by events which they could not foresee, and over which they had no power. The victor of to-day is to-morrow a captive, and he who now lieth “among the pots, shall come forth as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.”

The greater part of Hannah’s song of praise is employed in making a more enlarged display of the wisdom and justice of the divine Providence in the government of the world. “They that were full have hired themselves out for bread.” Some are born to ease and affluence, and through idolence, inattention or prodigality, reduce themselves to want. Some acquire wealth by frugality and industry. But however gotten, it is but an uncertain possession, and we daily see multitudes, not through any apparent fault of their own “waxing poor and falling into decay.” Others, as unaccountably rise into distinction and opulence. There is an unseen hand which gives and takes away. In prosperity there is no ground of insolence and triumph; in adversity no reason to despair.

Her own peculiar felicity again presents itself to view, and the incense of praise ascends to heaven. “The barren hath born seven sons, and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.” There is a Jewish legend which saith, that for every child that Hannah bore, one of Peninnah’s died. It is a mere conjecture; Hannah’s triumphant song is rather a proof of the contrary. She discovers a spirit too excellent, in other respects, to permit us to suppose her capable of rejoicing in the devastation which the hand of God had wrought, much less in the destruction of her own husband’s family. That heart must be lost to every feeling of humanity, lost to decency, lost to the fear of God, who can make the calamity of another, especially such a calamity, a ground of self-gratulation, and com-

placency, or a subject of thanksgiving to a holy and merciful God, as if he could become a party to our petty jealousies and contentions. No, a spirit so regulated as hers, so patient under mortification, so long nurtured in the school of affliction, so observant of, and submissive to the will of Providence, could not taste the mortality of even Peninnah's children as a source of joy. Her expressions amount to no more than a devout and humble acknowledgment of unerring wisdom, of unimpeachable justice, in conducting all the affairs of this world: in building up families, and in bringing them low; in exercising an absolute right of sovereignty, which will not be compelled to give account of its matters to any one. The gift of children is not always withheld in anger, nor bestowed in kindness, as the character and history of Eli's family will shortly evince.

She proceeds to pursue the same idea of a divine superintendence in every thing, through a variety of particulars strikingly contrasted one with another, all aiming at the same end, all calculated to enforce the same practical lesson. "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory; for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness: for by strength shall no man prevail," Verse 6—9.

In the conclusion of her song, Hannah, wrapt into futurity, no doubt by the spirit of prophecy, contemplates the final consummation of the great mystery of Providence, as issuing in the establishment of universal order: in the suppression and punishment of vice; and in the unchangeable and permanent glory of a Redeemer's kingdom. The same hand which balances the spheres, which conducts all the affairs of men,

which preserves harmony and prevents confusion, in both the natural and moral worlds, shall at length, by another almighty *fiat*, “make all things new.” Then “the adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces: out of heaven shall he thunder upon them.” “But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.” Chastisement shall, therefore, be preceded by righteous judgment, that every mouth may be stopped before God. “The LORD shall judge the ends of the earth.” Now these words of the prophetic mother of Samuel, taken in connexion with the clearer and fuller display of a judgment to come, in the writings in the New Testament, clearly point out that glorious and divine person, in whose hallowed name the song terminates—God’s *Anointed*. A woman was honoured first to announce the Saviour of the world, under that description; and a succession of prophets henceforward hold it up to the eyes of succeeding generations, as “all their salvation, and all their desire.” Samuel, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Habakkuk, each in his day, proclaims the approach of this King of glory, of whom all who were *anointed* with material oil, whether priests, or prophets, or kings, were but a shadow; and in whose superior lustre they disappear, as the light of the stars is absorbed in the splendour of the sun. The prophetess celebrates JEHOVAH, who “shall judge the ends of the earth,” as that “King to whom all authority is committed, to whom all strength is given,” as that “*anointed*” One, Messiah the prince, whose “horn” should be finally “exalted,” and before the brightness of whose coming, all disorder, iniquity, and misery shall flee away; who shall first “judge the ends of the earth,” and then reign for ever and ever.

And thus is the voice of this holy woman, near twelve hundred years before Messiah’s day, in perfect unison with the tongue of Christ himself, and of the apostles

of the Lord, after his ascension into heaven, and the descent of the Holy Spirit. "The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him," John v. 22, 23. "God now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead," Acts xvi. 30, 31. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever," Rev. ix. 15. And such, in every age, is the native expression of a soul alive to God, the natural aspiration of the spiritual and divine life.

—Art thou, O vain man, through grace a partaker of it? You shall "know it by its fruits." As it increases, corruption dies. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness," Rom. viii. 10. To be destitute of this life, in whatever state of perfection the intellectual life may be, is to be under the power of everlasting death, a death of trespasses and sins. But if its very first breathings are felt, however feebly, it is a new creation begun, it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Attempts will be made to extinguish it, but in vain. Like its Author it is immortal. It may be oppressed, it may be suspended, it may, at seasons, lie dormant, but it cannot expire. It doth not always make itself sensible to the eyes and ears of the world; for the believer's "life is *hid* with Christ in God." But "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 4. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2.

HISTORY OF HANNAH,

THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

LECTURE XX.

But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband, to offer the yearly sacrifice. And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The Lord give thee seed of this woman, for the loan which is lent to the Lord. And they went unto their own home. And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the Lord.—1 SAMUEL ii. 18—21.

THE character of most men is formed and fixed, before it is apprehended that they have, or can have, any character at all. Many vainly and fatally imagine, that the few first years of life may be disposed of as you please: that a little neglect may be easily repaired, that a little irregularity may easily be rectified. This is saying in other words, “never regard the morning; sleep it, trifle it, riot it away; a little closer application at noon will recover the loss.” “The spring returns, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come. No matter; it is soon enough to think of the labours of spring. Sing with the birds,

skip with the fawn, the diligence of a more advanced, more propitious season will bring every thing round; and the year shall be crowned with the horn of plenty.”

A single ray of reason is sufficient to detect and expose such absurdity; yet human conduct exhibits it, in almost universal prevalence. Infancy and childhood are vilely cast away; the morning is lost; the seed-time neglected.—And what is the consequence? A life full of confusion, and an old age full of regret; a day of unnecessary toil, and a night of vexation; a hurried summer, a meagre autumn, a comfortless winter.

It is the ordinance of Providence that the heaviest and most important part of education should devolve upon the mother. It begins before the child is born; her passions and habits affect the fruit of her womb. From her bosom the infant draws the precious juice of health and virtue, or the baleful poison of vice and disease. The fleeting period he passes under the shadow of her wing, is a season sacred to wisdom and piety. If the mother lead not her son to the hallowed spring, if she fail to disclose to his eager eye and panting heart the loveliness of goodness, the excellency of religion; if she permit the luxuriant soil to be overrun with briars and thorns; in vain will she strive to redeem the lost opportunity, by restraints and punishments, by precepts and masters, by schools and colleges, in a more advanced stage of life. The good or the mischief is done by the time he comes out of her hands.

That Providence which has imposed this employment on the feeble sex as a task, has most graciously contrived to render it one of the highest and most exquisite of female comforts; as, in truth, all the impositions, nay, the very chastisements of Heaven are really blessings. Let the woman who has given suck, tell if she can, “how tender it is to love the babe that milks her.” Ask that mother if there be any joy like the joy of hearing her child repeat the lessons which she taught him. Ask her, if she recollects or regards her pain

and anguish; her anxious days and sleepless nights. Ask her, if all is not forgotten and lost in the progress which expanding faculties have made, and in the richer harvest which they promise. Ask, if she has not already received more than her reward. If the representation of the case be just, let it procure for dutiful mothers the respect and gratitude which they merit; let it reconcile their minds to what is painful and laborious in their lot; let it raise them to their due rank and importance in society; and let it stimulate them to perseverance in well-doing, in the full assurance that they shall in no wise lose their reward.

—The passage of holy writ, on the consideration of which we are now entering, is a very affecting representation of the effects and consequence of a good and a bad education, exemplified in the conduct of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, and of Eli, the father of Hophni and Phinehas. Scripture, instead of multiplying precept upon precept, leads us at once into human life, and exhibits the law written in the event. It instructs us how to bring up children, by delineating the dreadful consequences of excessive lenity and indulgence on the one hand, and the happy fruits of early piety, regularity and self-government on the other. This theme, being by far the more pleasing of the two, and coming in more regularly in the order of history, shall obtain the preference, in the course of inquiry. Though, indeed, attention to the one must, of necessity, bring forward the other; and the good fortify and recommend itself by contrast with the evil.

The education of Samuel began in the pious resolution of his mother before he was conceived in the womb. “If thou wilt give unto thine handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life.” Every parent receives every child under a tacit engagement to the same purpose: and the command of God, from the moment of the birth, is, “Rear that child for me.” I have watched over him while he lay

in darkness, “ mine eyes saw his substance yet being imperfect; in my book all his members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. I added the immortal principle to the finished limbs; I stamped my image upon him. There my hand has scattered the seeds of wisdom and happiness; to thy fostering care I commit that tender plant. Cared for, it will abundantly reward thy toil; neglected, it will grow into a sharp thorn to tear thy flesh. Every day, every hour is producing a change in it. Grow it will and must; what it grows into, depends upon thyself. Of thy hand will I require it.”

As Samuel was to be a Nazarite to God from the womb, the law prescribed to the mother certain ceremonial observances respecting her own conduct, and the treatment of her own person; which corresponded to that high distinction. Abstinence, in particular, from certain kinds of meat and drink, which might effectually affect the bodily or mental constitution of the unborn infant. With these prescriptions we have no room to doubt Hannah punctually complied. And here we fix the second stage, or if you will, erect the second pillar of education. The commands of God are none of them arbitrary and capricious, but founded in reason and the nature of things. Whatever strongly affects the mother during the months of pregnancy, beyond all doubt affects her offspring, whether it be violent liquors, or violent passions. It belongs to another profession than mine to account for this, and to determine how far the sympathy goes. But the general belief of it would most certainly have a very happy effect in procuring attention to female health, regularity and tranquillity in that delicate and interesting situation. The comfort of both parent and child, to the end of life; what do I say? through the whole of their existence, may be concerned in it.

As soon as Samuel was born, we find Hannah devoting undivided attention to the first and sweetest of ma-

ternal offices. "The woman tarried at home, and gave her son suck, until she weaned him." Nature and inclination concur in pressing this duty upon every mother. The instances of real inability are too few to merit consideration. The performance of it, carries its own recompense in its bosom; the neglect, is, first and last, its own punishment. Without considering at present its connexion with the health and comfort of both parties, let us attend for a moment to its influence on morals, and as constituting a branch of education. Is not parental and filial affection the first bond of society, and the foundation of all virtue? It is this which arms a delicate female with patience which no pain nor labour can exhaust, with fortitude which no calamity can subdue, with courage which no difficulty or danger can intimidate. It is this which first inspires the infant purpose to excel, which blows the sacred spark of gratitude into a flame, which first awakens and animates the latent seeds of immortality in the human soul. The first perception of a child, is the sweet sense of obligation and dependence: he feels himself far advanced in a commerce of reciprocal affection the moment he becomes conscious of his existence; and finds himself engaged in habits of goodness, long before he understands the meaning of words. And is it fit that these kind affections should be transferred to a stranger? Who can be so well qualified to communicate these earliest and best lessons, as a mother? Can you complain that your child is cold, indifferent or averse to you, when you set the example of coldness, indifference and aversion, and preferred a little ease or pleasure to his health and comfort, and what is infinitely more, to his early, infant morals? Can you hope from a hireling, who must have renounced nature too, as well as yourself, what God, and nature, and decency, and regard to your own real well-being have pressed upon you in vain? It was so much a primary duty in the eyes of Hannah, that her attendance on the duties of the sanctuary at Shiloh gave place to it; she revered the ordinance of that

God, who says, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice;" and religious service is interrupted for a season, to be resumed with greater ardour and effect, when the duties of life were faithfully discharged.

At what age the child was weaned, the history relates not. He remained under the tuition of his mother till he was of a proper age to be presented to the Lord, in the place which he had chosen to put his name there, and to be put under the instruction of Eli, and prepared for the service of the tabernacle. And we shall presently find that he was infinitely more indebted to the solicitous attentions of a pious mother for his progress in divine knowledge, than he afterwards was to the superintendence of the high-priest of Israel, who knew so ill to rule his own house, and to whom, of a pupil, he became a teacher.

I am well aware of the difficulty of forming a plan of religious instruction for children. Scripture suggests the happiest, the most obvious, and the most effectual. It ought to come from the children themselves. They are desirous of information. If left to themselves, they will think and inquire. Their questions will point out the mode of instruction. Do not be over anxious to take the lead, but carefully follow them. Their ideas will be directed by what they observe and feel; and strong facts and appearances of nature will make a deep and lasting impression upon them. He who knows what is in man, has accordingly given us, in a particular example, a general rule of proceeding in this great article: "And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? Thou shalt say unto him, by strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of bondage. And it came to pass when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt." It was probably thus that Hannah instructed her darling son; stored his memory with interesting events, and touched his heart by affecting representations of the mercy and judgment of God, exemplified in the history

of his own forefathers. Milk is the proper food of babes; strong meat belongeth to them who are of full age. A dry precept is but half understood, and is speedily forgotten; but a tale of distress, the triumph of goodness over malevolence and opposition, the merited shame and punishment of wickedness, is easily understood, is long retained, and its impression is not to be effaced.

We advance to the fourth stage of wise and good education, of which we have the pattern before us. The same principle which induced Hannah to keep her son at home for a season, and to abide with him, constrained her to send him from home, to give up her interest in him, when the service of God, and the greater good of the child demanded the sacrifice. It is just the reverse of what high life, at least with us, daily presents. You shall see a mother who hardly inquired after her child at the time of life when her tenderness was most necessary to him, all at once assuming the parent, exercising an affected tenderness which he no longer needs, reducing him to childhood after he is becoming a man, and endeavouring to compensate by an after-growth of affection, the unkindness and neglect which blighted the early blossoms of the spring. She can suffer him no longer out of her sight. The discipline which her own wickedness has rendered necessary to his improvement, is reprobated as cruelty, and the poor youth is frequently ruined by having at one time, no mother at all; at another, one too much. I honour the firmness of Hannah as much as I love her motherly softness and attachment. To possess with gratitude, to cherish a worthy object with tenderness, and to resign it with steadiness and magnanimity, is equally an object of admiration and esteem. Observe the mixed emotions which animate and correct her countenance as she conducts her well-beloved son to the altar. The saint speaks in that eye, sparkling with delight, as she devotes what she holds most dear in the world to Him, from whom she had by holy importunity obtained him;

the tear rushes to it, and all the mother stands confessed as she retires. Piety has prevailed, and presented the offering: nature feels, but submits.

It is easier to conceive than to describe what was the state of her mind as she returned from Shiloh to Ramah: the anxiety and regret at leaving her Samuel behind; the satisfaction and delight of reflecting in what hands she had left him, and to what care she had committed him. But we hear of no wild projects formed of removing the whole family to reside at Shiloh, in order to indulge a fond mother's partial affection, with the continual presence of her little minion. No, the same spirit of prudence, the same domestic regards, the same sense of duty which once engaged her to prefer attention to Samuel, to attendance on the sacred festival, now engage her to prefer the unostentatious employments of a wife, and the mistress of a family at Ramah, to the sacredness of the tabernacle, and the care of an only son, a first-born. But the heart of a mother finds, and flies to, the innocent refuge which nature pointed out. She employs her mind and her hands during the intervals of the feast, about her absent son; "His mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice." O how pure, how cheap, how satisfying are the pleasures of virtue! No words can express the inward, the incommunicable joy of that mother, as her fingers wove the threads of that little coat, as her eyes saw it grow into shape and colour and shade, as the increasing stature of the wearer rendered the increase of her labour necessary. You must be converted and become a little child, a dutiful, affectionate, and pious child, like Samuel, to conceive the delight of seeing his parents return, of putting on his new garment, of exhibiting his mother's present. These nothings are the bond of affection among virtuous minds, and the source of their felicity.

This we settle as a more advanced stage of education, as far as it depends upon the mother. To part with the child firmly and unreluctantly when the proper hour of separation comes; to preserve the commerce of affection by works and messages of kindness; and to subject every feeling and pursuit to the known and declared will of God. Let no one, O woman, usurp thy province, step between thee and thy child, steal his affections from thee. What, suffer him to have a step-mother while thou art yet living! Forbid it nature, forbid it decency, forbid it religion. But the hour of separation is arrived, you have done your duty, he must now pass into other hands; as a mother you retained him, as a mother resigned him. You have not laboured in vain: you have not spent your strength for nought and in vain. Be of good cheer, you have trained him up in the way in which he should go, and when old he will not depart from it. Your heart shall rejoice in him many days hence. He shall be to thee a crown of glory when thou art dropping into the grave.

The disorderly state of Eli's family, the consequence of a careless and neglected education, will, through the divine permission, be the subject of the next Lecture.

I conclude with addressing myself in a very few words, first, to the parents of the other sex. You see what a heavy burden God and nature have laid upon the weaker of the two. You are bound in justice, in humanity, in gratitude, to alleviate it. To no purpose will the mother watch and toil, unless you co-operate. She has part of her reward in her very employment: her recompense will be complete if she obtain your approbation, and retain your affection. Has offence arisen, does calamity press, is the spirit ruffled, is her person changed? Reflect, she is the mother of thy child; perhaps she lost her looks, her health, it may be her spirits and temper, in doing the duty of a mother: she ought to be the more estimable in your eyes at least.

Let me next speak for a moment to ingenuous youth.

Young man, superadded to all the other motives to virtue, if you feel not the force of this, you are lost indeed. There is a worthy woman in the world, who loves you as her own soul, who gave you your first nourishment and instruction, who brought you into life at the risk of her own, to whom nothing that affects you can be a matter of indifference. She is jealous over you with a holy jealousy. If you tread the ways of wisdom, how her heart will be satisfied within her! If you decline from the right path, if you become “a son of Belial,” you will rend her with severer pangs than those which she endured in bringing thee into the world. And can your heart permit you to plunge a dagger into the heart of your own mother? Who does not shudder at the thought of a parricide so detestable, so monstrous? For a mother’s sake, renounce that “covenant with death:” retrace thy wandering steps, resume the reins of self-government, and return to real rest and joy.

Young woman, let thine eyes be still toward the nurse, the guide, the comforter, the refuge of thy early years. Alleviate, by partaking of, the burdens and labours of her station; dissipate her solicitude; soothe her pains; give her cause to bless the day she bare thee. Trust in her as thy most prudent counsellor, as thy most assured friend, as thy most intelligent instructor. Do her good, and not evil, all the days of thy life. Rise into usefulness, into importance, into respectability, by marking her footsteps, imbibing her spirit, following her example. A daughter unkind, undutiful, ungrateful to a mother, is of all monsters the most odious and disgusting. Youthful excellence is never more amiable and attractive, than when it seeks a retreat and retirement under the maternal wing, and, shrinking from the public eye, seeks its reward in a mother’s smile of approbation.

HISTORY OF HANNAH,

THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

LECTURE XXI.

Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord. And the priest's custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand: and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or chaldron, or pot; all that the flesh-hook brought up, the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither. Also before they burned the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force. Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord: for men abhorred the offering of the Lord. Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel. And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress.—1 SAMUEL ii, 12—17, 23, 24.

PERFECTION consists in the happy medium between the two little and too much. It is eminent-

ly conspicuous in every thing that comes immediately from God. "He is the rock, his work is perfect, and all his ways are judgment." Contemplate the stupendous whole, or examine the minutest part, and you find no redundancy, no defect. All is good, yea, very good. But man is ever in the extreme. Now, under the power of an idolence which shrinks from every appearance of difficulty or danger, and now hurried on by a zeal which overleaps all the bounds of wisdom and discretion. Now, he cannot be prevailed on to begin, and now nothing can persuade him to stop. He makes his very good to be evil spoken of, by imprudence and excess in the manner of performing it.

In nothing is human ignorance and frailty more apparent, than in the important article of education. It is conducted, at one time, with a severity that intimidates and overwhelms; at another, with a lenity that flatters, encourages, and fosters vice. One is driven into an evil course by despair, another drawn into it, and fortified in it, by excessive indulgence. It is, in truth, no easy task to manage this matter aright. The modes of treatment are as various as the character and dispositions of the young ones, who are the subjects of it. The application of a general rule is impracticable and absurd. The discipline which would oppress one child, is hardly sufficient to restrain another within any bounds of decency. It is happy when the child is inured to habits of restraint and submission from the cradle. If the mother has discharged her duty tolerably, the business of the father and master is half executed. Last Lord's day we had the satisfaction of observing the effects of an early good education, in the example of Hannah, the mother of Samuel. We saw in her conduct a happy mixture of tenderness and resolution; of attention to domestic employments, and regard to the offices of religion; of moderated anxiety about the safety and comfort of her son's person, and prudent concern about the culture of his mind. We are, this evening, to meditate

on a subject much less pleasing, but not less instructive; the ruinous effects of education neglected; youth licentious and unrestrained, sinking gradually into universal depravity, and issuing in accumulated wretchedness and untimely death. A father weak and indulgent; sons profligate and abandoned; a God holy, righteous, and just.

Observe, in the entrance, the provision which infinite wisdom has been making to supply the breach which was ready to be made in the priesthood. The measure of the iniquity of Eli's sons were nearly full, their destruction was hastening on; Samuel is already born, instructed in, prepared for, the service of the tabernacle; and the care of a pious mother has been employed, in the hand of Providence, to counteract the criminal negligence and carelessness of a too easy father.

The representation given us of the degeneracy and disoluteness of the Levitical family, equals, if not exceeds, all that history relates of the irregularity, and impurity of idol worship. The law had made a decent, and even an ample provision, for them who ministered at the altar, but had carefully guarded against whatever tended to countenance luxury or excess. But behold every thing confounded. The directors of religious worship are become the patterns of impiety. There is no reverence of God, no regard to man. Before the fat of the sacrifice smokes upon the altar of Jehovah, the choicest pieces of the victim are served up on the abominable table of a luxurious priest. The pious worshipper has his offering marred, his spirit discomposed, the festival of his family peace disturbed and defrauded, and indecencies, too shocking to be mentioned, close the scene of riot and intemperance.

All this is easily to be traced up to early habits of indulgence: men could not have become thus wicked all at once. Had the authority of the father, had the sanctity of the high-priest, had the severity of the judge interposed, to check and punish the first deviation from

propriety, it had never come to this. We may judge of the gentleness with which slighter offences were re-proved, when the most atrocious transgressions meet with so mild a rebuke as this, "Nay, my sons, it is no good report that I hear." This is rather an invitation to commit iniquity, than the vengeance of a magistrate to expose and suppress it. To point out the aggravations of Eli's offence, is neither malicious nor useless; it is written, among the other things in this book, for our instruction, and by the blessing of God it may prove salutary, as a beacon pointing out the rock on which others have made shipwreck.

Against his personal virtue no censure is insinuated. He seems to have been one of those quiet, easy, good-natured men, who love not to have their tranquillity disturbed, and are loth to disturb that of others; who without being vicious themselves, by a passive tameness, become the undesigned abettors of the sins of other men. The corruption of the times must indeed have been very great, when it was supposed possible for the mistress of a family, during the solemnity of a sacred festival, to be disguised with wine, in the face of the sun, in the court of God's house. But the bare possibility of such a case, grievously enhances his guilt. He had not done his duty as the public guardian of morals and religion, or Hannah had not been suspected of intemperance, and the suspicion reflects the highest dishonour on both his understanding, and his heart; his bitterest enemy could not have devised a severer censure upon his conduct, than that under the priesthood of Eli such enormities were committed, and connived at.

Men in power are chargeable, not only with the evil which they do, but also with the evil which they might have prevented, but did not. Power is delegated to them for this very end, that they may be "a terror to evil doers," as well as "a praise to such as do well." The same carelessness runs through the whole of his

domestic and public administration; a disorderly family, a polluted church, a distracted, staggering state; no government, or what was worse than none. The best things are the most liable to abuse: and we shall give this faulty, unhappy father all the credit we can. His errors had their origin perhaps in goodness. His natural disposition was mild and gentle; his parental affection was great; he was unwilling to render any one unhappy; he thought of prevailing by love! He began with overlooking trifling faults; he flattered himself that the reason and reflection of riper years would correct and cure the wildness and irregularity of boyish days; "Surely the young men will by and by see their folly, and grow wiser." Who would not rather attempt to rule by love? But what is the proper conduct and expression of love? What saith the wisest of mankind? "He that spareth the rod, *hateth* the child." What saith the great Father and Saviour of all men? "As many as I *love*, I rebuke and chasten." There is no such thing as happiness, but in habits of order, decency and subjection. The man, or the child, who knows no law but that of appetite or caprice, must of necessity be miserable. It is cruelty, not kindness, to give a man up to himself; and to dream of changing habits of indolence, dissipation, and criminal indulgence, by remonstrance and reason, is expecting that reason should survive itself, or that it should effect, when enfeebled, disordered, and corrupted, what it could not do when clear, and sound, and vigorous. But, "the grace of God is almighty, and his mercies are very great." Nay, but who art thou, O man, who darest to expect, or ask a miracle of grace, with the consciousness of having neglected the means, which timely employed, might, through the divine blessing, have proved effectual without a miraculous interposition? The one talent is justly taken away from him who hid it in the earth, and it is given to increase the store of the diligent and faithful servant,

who, by wisdom and industry, had increased his five talents into ten.

The human mind, put under early culture, may be made to produce any thing. It possesses a happy pliancy, which may be moulded into any form. But the same plant, which, young and tender, you could with a touch bend into what shape you pleased; when grown into a tree, resists every effort of your strength. Cut it down you may, break it you may, cleave it asunder you may, but bend it you cannot. And alas, how great a portion of human life is spent in useless, unavailing regret for opportunities lost, seasons mispent, mischief done, misery incurred! Yet men will not profit even by experience, that plainest, most faithful, and most powerful of all instructors.

Who can view, without pitying him, that wretched old man, deploring the guilt which he himself had occasioned, which he wants resolution to punish, and wisdom to cure; which is proceeding from evil to worse, filling the past with remorse, and overspreading the future with despair? Ah, how heavily he suffers in his age, because these profligate sons bore not the wholesome yoke of discipline and restraint in their youth! Who can conceive the anguish of Jacob's soul as he was sinking into the grave under the loss of a gracious son by the stroke of Providence? But what is it, compared to the more dreadful anguish of Eli, looking forward in horror to the utter extinction of all his family, with the insupportable reflection, that all, was chargeable upon himself?

The character and behaviour of the unhappy young men is a melancholy and affecting representation of the progress of moral corruption. It begins in their making light of the ordinances of religion which they were bound, by their office, to venerate themselves, and to recommend by their example, to others. And you may be assured there is something essentially wrong about the man who expresses real or affected contempt for the worship of God. It is a gross violation of the

laws of decency and good breeding. For what title can you have to insult that sober-minded person, who has given you no provocation, by deriding or profaning what he holds sacred? It is a direct defiance to the laws of your country, which have adopted the institutions of religion, to assist, at least, in carrying on and supporting good government, so essential to public happiness. He that despises, therefore, the ordinances of God, is a friend to anarchy, is making a wicked attempt to dissolve the bands of society, and deserves to be treated as a public enemy. It is an argument of a light and silly mind, aiming to supply the want of consequence by affected boldness, impiety and singularity; and which, like every other species of affectation, generally misses its aim.

In the example before us, we find irreverence toward God speedily degenerating into violence and injustice to men. And indeed what hold has society of that man who has shaken off the first and strongest obligations of his nature, who has professedly degraded himself, and is become less than a man, in making the silly attempt to be thought something more. He who begins with defrauding God of his due, will not long be scrupulous about invading the rights of his fellow-creature. The same spirit which defers the sacrifice till an unruly appetite be first gratified, will, by and by, proceed to "take by force" the portion of another; and will lose all sense of the just claims and real wants of mankind, in pride and selfishness.

The third stage of this humiliating progress, discovers to us men wholly brutified, plunged into the lowest, grossest sensuality; sinking deeper and deeper in the mire, till nothing remains but the image of the most odious and abominable of animals. Young man, look at the picture, consider it well. If you are so happy as to have preserved your virtue, if you have any savour of piety, you must regard it with a mixture of indignation and pity; if you are not lost to the feelings of humanity, it will fill you with loathing and disgust. The sequel

will teach us many important lessons. For my own part, ever since I became a father, I have never been able to read this history without trembling; and my anxiety has not been diminished by reflecting, that the children whom God has given me, neither in their bodies, nor their minds, nor their dispositions, are among the lowest of their species. I have an awful conviction, that if any of them should unhappily turn out ill, a great part of the blame will be imputable to myself. I am frequently tempted to rejoice that none of my grown children have made choice of my own profession, the most dangerous, the most responsible of all; and I am much more alarmed at the apprehension, that when they are become men and women, they may accuse me of over-indulgence, than I am now, of being thought harsh and unkind by children.

As the greatest and most respectable part of my audience are parents, I must of necessity apply the great and important subject of my discourse particularly to them. And, as I always flatter myself with the greater hope of success with female parents, I take the liberty of addressing myself first to mothers. Providence, my friends, as I have frequently repeated, has laid the earliest, the heaviest, and the most important part of education, upon you; but it has also alleviated and sweetened the task by many peculiar affections and endearments. Let me suppose you have done your duty, and carefully reared up infancy and childhood. The charge must then pass into other hands. But surely both your heart and conscience tell you that you have not yet done with them. Female children in particular are an anxious and a lasting burthen upon the mother. They love you, they look up to you, they *imitate* you. You must *be* therefore what you wish them to become. Will a daughter learn to be industrious from an idle, indolent mother? Will she learn to be sober-minded, by seeing you habitually carried away by the pride of life? Will she catch the spirit of piety from one whose very sabbaths are devoted to

dissipation and pleasure? I will not insult you by supposing that a positively bad example has been set, or that your darling charge may have grossly deviated from the paths of virtue; but let me suppose, for a moment, a case that may, and does happen every day; that your daughter has grown up with a vain, light, worldly mind; has acquired a taste for dress and amusement; has become a perfect mistress of the usual accomplishments of the day and place in which we live; has become an object of attention and admiration. Let me suppose her attacked with disease, and that disease, perhaps, the effect of levity and dissipation. See, the roses are fading upon her cheek, her “beauty is wasting like a moth;” all her vivacity is reduced to the sudden glow of the hectic, which is gone before it is well come; she feels the witness of death at her heart, she looks up to you with clouded, wistful eyes, and says, “Ah, my mother, you was too indulgent to me. You assisted the tongue of the flatterer, and taught me to forget myself. I was made to believe myself an angel, and now feel that I am a worm. Seeking to shine in the eyes of man, I have neglected the means of finding favour in the sight of God. I now wish I had frequented the house of prayer more; I wish I had not frequented the company of the giddy, the thoughtless, and the profane. I do not accuse my dear mother of designedly misleading me; but would to God she had better understood her own duty and my real interest. Life had been more respectable, and death less frightful than I find it to be. O my God, have mercy, have mercy upon me.”

It had been easy to have added to the strength of this address; but even from this the maternal heart recoils, and deprecates with horror, an hour so dreadful. Well, blessed be God, it is yet a great way off; and what is more, it is in your power to prevent it; I do not mean the stroke of death; but the arrow of death dipt in the poison of remorse. God grant that none here may ever feel it.

The criminality of Eli consisted, my brethren, in the neglect of his duty; and you have seen how fatal that neglect was to himself and to his family. Dare I suppose there is a father here, who has been more than passive in the corruption of his own child; who has been the promoter and the pattern of wickedness; who has with his own hand scattered the seeds of death in that precious soil; and trained up an immortal being to destruction? Pause, and consider. Are you prepared to meet the stings of an awakened conscience, accusing thee of murder, of soul-murder, the murder of thy own son, whom thou lovedst? Are you fortified against the cutting reproaches of that child, laying his eternal ruin to your charge? Have you prepared your defence against that awful day when a righteous God shall demand an account of the sacred trust committed to thee? If to contemplate his punishment at a distance be wo unutterable, what were it to be at once the cause and the partaker of it? The terrified imagination flees from this hell of hells, and seeks refuge in prayer to a merciful God, that he would graciously save you from it.

Let young ones be persuaded to be patient of restraint, of correction, and of reproof. You are not grieved willingly, you are not afflicted unnecessarily, you are not chastised out of caprice. “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother; for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not,” Prov. i. 8—10. “A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother,” Prov. x. 1. Venerate the name, the day, the house, the worship of God. Remember that want of decency is want of sense: that the immoderate indulgence of appetite is inimical to all true enjoyment: that which is renounced, from respect to reason and conscience, is enjoyed: that present comfort and future happiness, are built on habits of order, self-government, justice, benevolence, and subjection to divine authority.

HISTORY OF HANNAH,

THE MOTHER OF SAMUEL.

LECTURE XXII.

And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord and also with men.—1 SAMUEL ii. 26.

NO appearance of nature is more striking, no one affords a more complete demonstration of the great Creator's consummate wisdom and unremitting attention, than the gradual and imperceptible progress of every thing in nature, to its perfection, and to its dissolution. The dawning light insensibly advances to the perfect day, and the moment high noon is gained, an approach is made towards night. When the moon has waned, till she is lost in the sun's brighter rays, she begins to emerge into form and lustre again; having waxed till her resplendent orb is full, that moment she begins to decay. We are prepared to bear the raging heat of the dog-star by the grateful vicissitudes and advances of spring; and are fortified against winter's stormy blast, by the contracting light and the temperate cold of sober autumn.

Human life too has its morning, noon and night; its spring and fall; and empires have their infancy, maturity and old age. Time is the dawning of eternity; earth is the scene of preparation for heaven; and mortality, the passage to life and immortality. Every thing is beautiful in its season, and every state is a prepara-

tion for that which is to succeed it. Nature and providence admit of few sudden and violent transitions; because the human frame, both of body and mind, is little qualified to endure them.

The passage before us presents one of the most pleasing objects of contemplation—human life at its happiest period, and in its most smiling aspect—early youth, increasing beauty and strength, gradual and regular improvement. While the family of Eli was exhibiting multiplied instances of the fatal effects of neglected infancy and unrestrained childhood, the son of Elkanah was silently demonstrating the importance of early culture, and modestly reproving grey hairs, by exemplifying the lessons which his pious and prudent mother had taught him. The self-same ideas are here employed to describe the early progress of Samuel in wisdom, beauty, and goodness, which are afterwards applied to Christ himself, at a similar period of his earthly existence, and they furnish us with many excellent additional hints respecting the important subject of education, which now deserve to be more at large unfolded. “The child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men;” and “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

Observe here, first, What is the work of nature, namely, to grow on, to “increase in stature.” The moment, O man, thy child begins to breathe, a progress commences which nothing can stop. Grow he will, and must; cease from all solicitude on this score. These feeble limbs will gather strength; by stumbling and falling, he will learn to walk and run; after stammering for a while, he will come to speak plainly, and he who seems at present hardly to possess the faculty of sight, will soon distinguish object from object. Cease from the vain imagination of assisting or improving nature. Assist nature! If you try to mend that shape, trust me, you will spoil it. Every violent

attempt to quicken growth will but retard it, and an over-solicitude to preserve health, will infallibly scatter the seeds of distemper. Toward the improvement of the bodily faculties, the most anxious and intelligent parent can do just nothing at all; “by taking thought he cannot add one cubit to the stature;” it is by cultivating the mind, only, that the features, shape and person can be improved.

The reverse of this is the practice of the world. The whole attention is directed to personal accomplishment. Nature is cramped, stretched, distorted, to humour an absurd taste and an erroneous judgment, and she avenges herself for the unwise encroachment on her province, by encroaching, in her turn, on the province of reason and discretion; rendering all their late efforts useless and unprofitable; making education, which is clogged with so many difficulties already, absolutely impracticable. What can the wisest master do, I beseech you, with a temper soured by habits of unnatural restraint, with a mind rendered sickly by petty attentions to punctilio, with a spirit swallowed up in a sense of its own importance? And yet the master is blamed for the fault, which parents themselves have committed. Guard your child as well as you can from accidents. See that his food be simple and wholesome, and administered in due season; let his body be free and unfettered; his clothing light and easy; his exercises, both as to kind and duration, of his own choosing; and he will grow on, and increase in stature, he will acquire vigour, will preserve sweetness of temper, will be happy in himself, and a source of happiness to all around him; he will pass with cheerfulness, like Samuel, into the hands of his instructor, without any prejudices, but such as are on the side of goodness, and, through the blessing of Heaven, will day by day fulfil a parent’s hope, and constitute a parent’s joy.

There is a fruitless, perhaps a sinful anxiety, of another kind, which parents sometimes express, and which

often becomes a source of distress to themselves, and of partiality and injustice to their children. I mean the sex of their offspring. The expectation of pride, avarice, ignorance, or caprice, presumes to usurp the prerogative of omniscience, and, in the event of disappointment, cruelty and injustice to an innocent babe are superadded to impiety toward a wise and righteous God. It is dangerous, as well as criminal, to assume the incommunicable attributes of Deity. The man is equally unhappy in attaining or missing his object, if he pursue it, neglecting, defying, or accusing the interposition of Providence. There is an instance of goodness in the divine administration which is too generally overlooked, too little prized and acknowledged; namely, the perfect and exact conformation of children, both in body and mind. Among the myriads which are daily born into the world, how rare are the exceptions from the general rule! Every one bears the marks of sovereign wisdom, is the production of omnipotence, has the image of God impressed upon him. How few exceed or fall short of the just standard in respect of stature! How few are born deprived of the use of reason, how few deficient or redundant in their bodily organs! And, may not even these few deviations from the general rule, these acts of divine sovereignty in the government of the world, serve in a future economy, more gloriously to illustrate the perfections of him who has formed all things to the honour of his own great name.

Is thy child, O man, born complete in all his members, is he endued with the ordinary intellectual powers, is he like the children of thy neighbour? How much art thou indebted to the goodness of Heaven! Are his faculties, corporeal or mental, as parental partiality is frequently disposed to believe, superior to those of others? Remember, it is a great addition to thy charge; see that thou mar not the work of God, disfigure not that fair fabric, pervert not talents peculiarly precious and rare, let not thy glory be turned into shame. Has Providence, O woman, wounded thee there where thy sen-

sibility is greatest, in the fruit of thy womb! Be of good comfort, he in whom thou trustest, on whom thou hast believed, saith, "Behold I make all things new." Then "the eye of the blind shall be opened, and the ear of the deaf unstopped, then the lame man shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." "The vile body shall be changed and fashioned like to Christ's glorious body." Then the soul which scarcely awoke to reason, shall discern judgment, and the wandering spirit shall be brought back to composure and tranquillity. Young man, young woman, hast thou received from the bountiful hand of nature, a sound mind in a sound and well-proportioned body? Defile not, destroy not the fair temple; let it be "an habitation of God through the Spirit;" let the image of the divine inhabitant shine serenely on that forehead, beam benevolence from that eye, distil in accents of kindness from those lips. Force not upon the beholder the humiliating contrast between a lovely form and a hateful disposition; be all of a piece.

Observe, secondly, The work of education, the influence of virtuous habits and example. Samuel not only grew *on* but grew *gracious*, grew in favour. There is naturally a prejudice, in the first instance, in favour of youth and beauty, independent of other qualities; but that prejudice quickly dies away, where personal comeliness is unsupported by corresponding goodness. But if it be found disfigured by vice, not only is the favourable impression effaced, but exchanged for a counter impression of detestation and contempt. As, on the contrary, the prejudice against ordinary looks is also momentary, when we find them allied to sense and talents, piety and modesty; and our esteem and veneration of the character are highly increased from our expecting less.

Poor indeed is that virtue which lives only in the estimation of the world, which aims only at the approbation and praise of men; but, on the other hand, true

virtue will always be concerned to preserve reputation, will ever prefer a good name to great riches, and unaffectedly rejoice in the esteem of the wise and good, as part of its reward. What a motive was it to a youth like Samuel to persevere in well doing, to grow in grace, to have his decency of behaviour, his filial affection, his docility and submission to Eli, his unassuming piety, his growing wisdom, his expanding faculties, observed and commended by all who came to attend the service of the tabernacle! This is not pride, it is the honest consciousness of a worthy mind, loving and seeking what is good, not for the sake of fame, but its own; yet rejoicing in fame as one of the fruits of goodness. That boy, that youth, that man, that woman, is lost, who is, or who professes to be, indifferent about the opinion of the world. The love of reputation is one of the trees of nature's planting, and none of her plants are easily rooted up; it often survives the hope of life itself, and the man discovers an earnest concern about his memory, after he has resigned his head to the executioner, and his body to the grave.

I recommend not to you, my young friend, that servility of deportment, that fawningness of submission and compliance which aims at the applause of every one alike, which is continually fearful of giving offence, which shrinks from doing good, lest by some it might be misconstrued; by that steadiness and perseverance in rectitude, which looks, and goes, straight on, which neither courts nor shuns the public eye, which can rejoice in the addition of the praise of men to the testimony of a good conscience, but trembles to think of purchasing the one with the loss of the other. It generally happens, in this case, as it did to Solomon in another. Young men who pursue virtue on its own account, and ask wisdom of God in the first place, certainly obtain what they seek and pray for, and they also obtain what they neither ask nor sought; the love of their fellow-creatures: the favour of man, comes unso-

licited to him, while he was pursuing a much higher object, peace with God, and peace with himself; while he who aimed at the inferior object alone, misses even that little, and thus becomes poor indeed. The foundation of Samuel's future eminence and usefulness, was thus laid in the early and tender care of a wise and pious mother. The youth had never been respected in the temple, had never been the object of general favour abroad, had the child learned to be froward, petulant or peevish in his father's house. O woman, would you have the world to think of your darling son as you do, put yourself betimes in the place of an unconcerned spectator, view him as an entire stranger would do, and let discretion regulate the overflowings of your heart. Ah, had Hannah favoured her child more, Israel had favoured him less! How ample and how sweet, even in this world, are the rewards of self-government, of self-denial, of moderation! Men literally, in many instances, enjoy what they reject, and lose what they gain. He who lendeth to the Lord, lays out his property on the best security, and to the greatest advantage. Samuel is infinitely more his mother's at Shiloh than at Ramah; his worth is multiplied in proportion as it is communicated, and enriches the public fund without impoverishing the private stock. The eyes of a whole people are already to him, the expectation of man keeps pace with the destination of Providence; and the child, ministering in a linen ephod, becomes more gracious, from comparison with the polluted ministrations of ungracious and ungodly men.

Observe, thirdly, Youth's highest praise, the most glorious reward of goodness, the happiest effect of good education, Samuel was "in favour with God." To obtain this more honourable distinction, much more was requisite than a regular and modest deportment, much more than promising talents, and childish innocence, and the other qualities which attract and captivate the eyes of men. The love of God has been betimes shed

abroad in that heart; Hannah has been mindful of her vow, and taught her son to remember his Creator in the days of his youth; and how grateful is early piety to him who saith, "My son, give me thine heart!" Lo, God has impressed his own image on that tender mind, and sees, and loves, and approves his own work. The great Jehovah has designed this wonderful child for high things, from the very womb, has raised him up to be the "rising again of many in Israel," to purify a polluted church, to save a sinking state, and is fitting him from the cradle, for his high destination.

The eye of the Lord observes with delight the progress of this plant of renown. He is hastening his own work in righteousness, is ready to perfect, by heavenly visions; the instructions of a pious mother, is preparing to crown the gracious with more grace. The favour of man is frequently the child of ignorance or caprice. They love and hate they know not why. Sometimes they hate where they ought to love, and love where they ought to hate; but the favour of God is ever founded in knowledge, is undirected by partial affection or personal regards, is the result of reason, the applause which perfect wisdom bestows on distinguished excellence. Samuel must have merited praise, else this praise had not been conferred on him. And singular must that merit have been, which could unite judgments so different, interests which so frequently clash. He who makes it his study to please man, can hardly be the servant of God; and to aim at pleasing God, is not always the road to the favour of men. Nothing but genuine, unaffected goodness, could have procured this joint approbation of God and man; and there is a charm in true goodness, which is irresistible. It may be overlooked for a season, it may be borne down, it may be obscured, it may be misrepresented, it may be hated and opposed; but it will prevail at length, will force itself into notice, will arise and shine, will command respect, silence envy, triumph over opposition; rejoice the wise and good, and keep the wicked in awe.

What mode of address shall I employ, to engage, for a moment, the attention of young ones; and to impress upon their hearts the importance of my subject? Would to God I could again become a little child, that, with the lessons of experience, I might regulate my own future conduct, and be an useful monitor to the simple and inexperienced. I would in that case say, My little friend, God and nature have made you lovely. The candour, and frankness, and benevolence of your heart shine upon your countenance. Every day discloses some new grace. You are increasing in stature: you are growing in favour with all who behold you. Every one thinks well, speaks well, hopes well of you. Grow on. Preserve that amiable simplicity. Let it be the charm of advancing years, of expanding faculties. Let that blooming face be still raised to Heaven with modest confidence; and those gracious eyes still beam good-will to men. May I never see that open forehead clouded and contracted. What, shall the horrid traces of vice disfigure that form? Shall every one that passeth by be constrained to turn away with loathing and aversion? Shall the mother who bare thee, have her face covered with a blush when thou art named? Must she be made to mourn the day which was once her joy? Angels will behold your progress with delight; they will rejoice in ministering unto you: they are ready to receive you into their number, when your course is finished. God himself regards you with smiles of complacency; he is ever ready to assist, to counsel, to protect, to receive you. Let there be joy in heaven concerning you. Now, now is the season for laying the foundation of useful life, respectable age, comfortable death.

—But what do I see? That youthful face already degraded by vice! so young, and so horrid! Unhappy youth, the depravity of thy heart is painted on thy forehead. The sight of thy own countenance filleth thee with horror. Shame and remorse are preying on

the marrow in thy bones. In the hours of solitude and retirement, stretched on thy bed, to which sleep is a stranger, thou art constrained to reflect on the wretchedness of thy condition; thou feelest thyself unworthy of the praises bestowed upon thee, by the partiality of those who know thee not; thou blushest in secret, and art filled with indignation against thyself, on calling to remembrance the innocence and simplicity of happier days. Thou givest up thyself as lost. No, young man, do not abandon thyself to despair: add not this to thy offences; there is help for thee, let it re-animate thy courage. Though "cast down," thou art "not destroyed." However debased that face, it is in thy power to amend, to ennoble it. Thou wert not destined always to remain an innocent child, nor couldest thou: by stumbling and falling thou wert to be instructed how to walk and to run. Wert thou wounded and bruised; wert thou plunged into the abyss? there is an arm nigh thee, which is able to raise thee up, to strengthen and to heal thee. Multitudes like thyself have been recovered, restored, established. "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord" will have mercy upon thee, and forgive, and receive thee. The impure, the profane, the blasphemer, the chief of sinners, have repented, have returned, have found favour; and there is hope also concerning thee. Only, for the Lord's sake, and for thy soul's sake, proceed no farther, persevere no longer in an evil course. One step forward may be fatal; to-morrow may find thee in the place where there is no hope. "Behold *now* is the accepted time, behold *now* is the day of salvation." "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near." "The wind is boisterous," the sea rages, thou art "beginning to sink," thou art ready to perish; but shalt not, whilst thou art able to exclaim, "Lord save me:" for behold "a very present help in trouble;" that helping hand which snatched Peter from the roaring gulf. "And immediately

Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Matt. xiv. 31.

I conclude with calling upon parents, and guardians, and instructors of youth, seriously to consider the importance of the trust committed unto them; and to discharge it under a sense of responsibility to God, to their pupils, to their country. The history under review, presses one point upon you, as of singular moment, and closely connected with every article of education and consequent improvement; I mean the study of the happy, but difficult medium between excessive indulgence and oppressive severity. The steady firmness of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, furnishes an useful example. If ever there was a child in danger of being corrupted by indulgence, it was he. But no symptom of it appears. He is treated as a mere ordinary lad, and from his earliest years to old age, evinces, by his conduct, the excellence of the precepts, and the steadiness of the discipline which formed his character, and laid the foundation of his eminence. He leaves home, and parts with his parents, while yet a child, with manly fortitude. Already under habits of submission to parental authority, he cheerfully transfers that submission to a stranger, to Eli. Untainted by imaginary terrors, the darkness of the night, the solemnity of the house of the Lord, silence and solitude, and sleep disturbed by extraordinary and unseasonable voices, excite in him no silly apprehension, draw from him no childish complaint, deter him from the performance of no duty. In all this we cannot but recognize the wisdom, the constancy, the fortitude of his excellent mother. Had she been foolishly fond, he had been peevish, and petulant, and timid, and discontented. Take a lesson from her, ye mothers of young children. If you would have these children happy, they must betimes be inured to subjection, to privation, to restraint. To multiply their desires by un-

bounded gratification, is the sure way to multiply their future pains and mortifications. Reduce their wants and wishes to the standard of nature, and you proportionably enlarge their sphere of enjoyment. Let them contract no fear but that of offending God, and of committing sin. Let them learn to consider all places, all seasons, all situations as equal, when duty calls. Impress on their opening minds the two great precepts on which “hang all the law and the prophets,” to love the Lord their God, and their fellow-creatures. Lead their infant steps to the Friend of little children, to the Saviour of mankind; to the knowledge, the belief, the love, the hope, the consolations of the gospel, and thereby preserve them “from paths wherein destroyers go.”

The profligate character and untimely end of Eli's sons, on the other hand, afford a solemn admonition of the inevitably ruinous effects of unbounded indulgence to the passions and caprices of youth. Had they been early habituated to the wholesome restraints of piety, decency, and justice, they could not have become thus criminal, nor would have perished thus miserably. In the excesses which they committed, we clearly see the relaxed government, the careless inspection, the unbounded licentiousness of their father's house. Neglect, in this case, occasioned the mischief. And the neglected field will soon be over-run with noxious weeds, though you sow, designedly, no poison in it. Fathers, see to it, that your instructions be sound, that your deportment be regular, that your discipline be exact. Account nothing unimportant that affects the moral and religious character of your son. Precept will go so far, example will go farther; but authority must support and enforce both the one and the other. You cannot, indeed, communicate the spirit of grace, but you can certainly form youth to habits of decency and order: and habitual decency is nearly allied to virtue, and may imperceptibly improve

into it. Do your part, and then you may with confidence “cast all your care” on God.

May it not be necessary to throw in a short word of caution against the opposite extreme, that of excessive severity to unoffending youth? This indeed is not so common as corruptive indulgence; but this too exists. How many promising young men have been forced into a continuance in an evil course, have been driven to desperation, have become “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,” because the first deviation could find no mercy, because a father armed himself with inflexible, unrelenting sternness for a slighter offence? Alas, how many amiable, excellent, promising young women have been lost to God, to their families, to society; have been dragged into the jaws of prostitution, and infamy, and disease, and premature death, because a father’s door was shut, and a mother’s heart hardened against the penitent; because her native refuge was no refuge to the miserable? She returned to her own, but her own received her not. Instances, however, might be produced of wiser conduct and happier consequences; of mercy extended, and the wanderer reclaimed; of human parents working together with “the Father of mercies,” and succeeding in rekindling the sacred flame of virtue, in restoring peace to the troubled breast, in recovering the fallen to reputation, to piety, to comfort, to usefulness. So long as God “waiteth to be gracious,” surely it well becomes man to “put on bowels of mercies, kindness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness, and charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”

Thus have I finished what I proposed, in attempting to delineate the female character, by instances taken from the sacred record. In these, and in the case of every virtuous woman, we see the great Creator’s design fully justified, in making for man “an help-meet for him.” That which is necessary cannot be despised; that which is useful ought to be valued; that

which is excellent commands respect; that which is improveable calls for cultivation. Bad men only revile and undervalue the other sex: the weak and ignorant idolize and worship it. The man of sense and virtue considers woman as his equal, his companion, his friend, and treats her accordingly; for friendship excludes equally invective and flattery. In the education and treatment of females, too much attention has, perhaps, been paid to sex. Why should they be for ever reminded that they are females, while it is of so much more importance to impress upon their minds, that they are *reasonable beings*, endowed with human faculties, faculties capable of perversion or of improvement, and that they are accountable to God for them? Wherefore obstruct to them one path to useful knowledge, one source of rational improvement, or of harmless enjoyment? If they are despised, they will become despicable. Treated either as slaves or as angels, they cease to be companions. Prize them, and they will become estimable; call forth their intellectual powers; and the empire of science will be extended and improved.

And let them learn wherein their real value, importance, and respectability consist. Not in receiving homage, but in meriting approbation; not in shining, but in useful employment; not in public eminence, but in domestic dignity; in acquiring and maintaining influence, not by pretension, vehemence, or trick, which are easily seen through, and always fail, but by good temper, perseverance in well-doing, and the practice of unfeigned piety.

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